

Is there another cantata cycle by Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel that belonged to Bach's performance repertoire?

by Andreas Glöckner (Leipzig) [from the *Bach-Jahrbuch* 2009]

Recently [in the *Bach-Jahrbuch* 2008, pp. 99-158] Marc-Roderich Pfau and Peter Wollny were able to document by the existence of two, previously unknown cantata text booklets Bach's performances of eight cantatas in the main churches, St. Nikolai and St. Thomas, in Leipzig from the 13th through the 19th Sundays after Trinity in 1735. Without exception they were composed by Stölzel and comprised part of his cantata cycle known as the "String-Music" cycle or with its entire title "The String Music of the Heart on the Day of the Lord, or Cantatas for Sundays and Feast Days". The author of the cantata texts was Benjamin Schmolck (1672-1737), a Silesian theologian and the author of chorale texts. Both authors mentioned above consider it to be a fact that Johann Sebastian Bach performed the entire cycle which ran from the first Sunday after Trinity 1735 until the Trinity Feast Day 1736.

While working on the catalogue of all the music materials at the Leipzig *Thomasschule* [this catalogue is still in preparation and will be part of study covering the history of the cantorship at the *Thomaskirche* during the 17th and 18th century], I noticed that there was another, additional cantata cycle by Stölzel, one that the school still owned until 1943.

[The historical holdings of the *Thomasschule* in Leipzig were essentially described in greatest detail in a handwritten catalogue prepared by Ernst Führer (1902-1974) in 1920/21. After the *Thomasschule* had been slightly damaged by bombing during the night from the 3rd to the 4th of December 1943, it was decided to evacuate the building in view of the imminent bombings to be expected. In the evening of the same day after the bombing, Günther Ramin, the *Thomaskantor* at that time, hurriedly left Leipzig to travel to Grimma with the *Thomaner* and took along only the most valuable musical materials from the *Thomasschule* Music Library. Included in these were all of the original sets of parts for 44 of Bach's chorale cantatas. Regarding the fate of all the remaining musical document materials, there still are not yet any certain findings. According to a written report by Christof Vollmer-Gérard, these materials were moved to Grimma sometime during the three weeks following January 20, 1944 and were placed on the balcony of the monastery church there. See the *Catalogue of Selected Secular*

and Sacred Music of the Thomanerchor Library in Grimma at the Royal School; Prepared by Christof Vollmer-Gérard, Prefecture I. 1944. The preface to this catalogue carries the date as follows: Grimma, September 20, 1944. It is in Grimma that the trail for these manuscripts is lost. According to another report, parts of the library were brought for storage to the Belgershain Castle near Grimma. This was the place where Ramin occasionally gave concerts as a harpsichordist.]

In a catalogue that listed all the music materials that the *Thomasschule* owned in 1823, the *Thomaskantor* Christian Theodor Weinlig at that time wrote the following description:

A yearly cycle of 69 cantatas as scores only without any parts listed in sequence as nos. 1 to 19.

Likewise Robert Eitner [no date given] listed the same cantatas as belonging to the *Thomasschule* Music Library:

A yearly cycle of sacred music, 69 cantatas for all Sundays and Feast Days

Fortunately, by means of Ernst Führer's listing of all the incipits, it was possible to determine that this was the cantata cycle that Stölzel composed for the church year 1731/32 beginning on the First Advent Sunday in 1731 covering all Sundays and Feast Days until the end of the church year in 1732 [usually at the end of November] . The original cantata booklet that has survived in Gotha reads:

Benjamin Schmolck's Book of Names of Christ and [all] Christians Opened Up in a Yearly Cycle for the Purpose of Sacred Edification and Performed as Music in the Royal Court Chapel at Friedenstein from Advent 1731 until 1732. Published in Gotha by Johann Andreas Reyher, Court-Sanctioned Printer.

In the City and County Library of Sondershausen, there are 73 individual copies of the 'half'-cantatas from this 'double' yearly cycle. ['double' = two-part cantatas where the first part was performed during the morning and the second during the afternoon service – this is assumed to have been done at the Palace Church of Sondershausen.] These cantatas were mainly copied by Johann Christoph Rödiger (1704-1765), who was at first a choir boy at the Gotha Court Chapel under Stölzel's direction. Later Rödiger sang alto and played the violin at the Sondershausen Court Chapel, where he apparently assumed a leading position after Johann Balthasar Christian Freislich left in 1731. Of the total of 70 two-part cantatas contained in the cantata textbook from Gotha, Sondershausen has 36 cantatas of these cantatas (both parts 1 & 2). Another cantata for Ascension has only part 1. After 1735, Stölzel's 'double'-cantata cycle was transferred to Sondershausen; while in Gotha,

(1st Day of Christmas and 1st Day of Easter) add the required 3 trumpets and timpani. Even for the music performed on the 1st Day of Pentecost, Stölzel scored it only for string instruments. This remarkable scoring characteristic makes us think of the title pages for two of Johann Sebastian Bach's cantatas which did not follow his own models or that of other composers:

Dominica 5. post Trinitatis | Concerto | à | 4 Voci | e | 4 Stromenti

[Staatsbibliothek Berlin, *Mus. ms. Bach P 1230*]

Dominica 6. post Trinitatis | Concerto | à | 4 Voci | e | 4 Stromenti

[*Mus. ms. Bach P 1130*]

There are two very important indications that would question whether these title pages were really intended for Bach's compositions. First, Bach does not mention the composer of these compositions, and second, the orchestration would be unique for Bach's Leipzig church cantatas. Stölzel's cantatas for the 5th and 6th Sundays after Trinity ("Gott hat uns gesegnet" and "Dies wird sein Name sein") have exactly the scoring that Bach wrote on both title pages: 4 vocal parts (SATB) and 4 instruments (V. 1, V. 2, Va. Bc.).

A later note added to the first title page by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach makes clear that the latter gave a repeat performance of the 2nd part of this cantata, which he received as part of his legacy from his father, in the *Jacobikirche* in Hamburg on the Sunday after New Year (January 3), 1774. The note reads: "performed the 2nd part on the Sunday after New Year in the *Jac[obikirche]* 1774."

Stölzel's double-cantata for the 5th Sunday after Trinity, 1732, has, according to the cantata text booklet and the copies that survived in Sondershausen, the following movements:

Part 1

1. Dictum (Ephesians 1:3): "Gott hat uns gesegnet mit allerlei geistlichem Segen"
2. Recit: "Willst du gesegnet sein, so muß du dich zu Christo finden"
3. Aria: "Von dir, mein Jesu, kommt der Segen"
4. Choral (p. 1103, verse 13): "Hilf mir und segne meinen Geist"

Part 2

5. Dictum (Titus 2:14): "Er reinigte ihm selbst ein Volk zum Eigentum"
6. Aria: "Ich bin nun ganz dein eigen"

7. Recit: "Macht mein Beruf mir viel Beschwerden"
8. Choral (p. 591, verse 14): "Ist gleich der Anfang etwas schwer"

The page references are to the Gotha Hymnal of 1731. By indicating the specific verse of the chorale and its page number, it appears that the congregation was to be included in the performance of the cantata.

From the notes by C. P. E. Bach on the title page of the 2nd cantata, the latter performed it on December 12, 1773 at St. Catherine's in Hamburg. Additional performances were given on April 30, 1780 in the *Nikolaikirche* and on May 7, 1780 at St. Catherine's in Hamburg.

Stölzel's cantata for the 6th Sunday after Trinity 1732 has the following movements:

Part 1

1. Dictum (Jeremiah 23:6): "Dies wird sein Name sein, daß man ihn nennen wird, Herr"
2. Recit: "Wer ist gerecht vor dir"
3. Aria: "Wie schön hast du dich nennen lassen"
4. Choral (p. 530, verse 2): "Wer Gott von Herzen liebet"

Part 2

5. Dictum (Isaiah 61:3): "Daß sie genennet werden Bäume der Gerechtigkeit"
6. Recit: "So bin ich denn gerecht, wenn ich im Glauben dich umfasse"
7. Aria: "Bäume der Gerechtigkeit tragen auch die rechten Früchte"
8. Choral (p. 281, verse 8): "Er ist gerecht für Gott allein"

Everything seems to point toward the fact that both of the title pages prepared by J. S. Bach were in reality lost copies of Stölzel's cantatas "Gott hat uns gesegnet" and "Dies wird sein Name sein". The watermark in both of the title pages is the large form of the "MA" which would place the performance of these cantatas in the period from 1732 to 1735.

This raises the question whether Bach may have performed the entire "Namebook" cantata cycle in the 1730s. It is noteworthy how close in time this is to the performances of cantatas from Stölzel's "String Music" cantata cycle from 1735. At the present time it is still not possible to provide precise dating for possible performances of the cantata cycle in question. This is due to the loss of the aforementioned 69 sources

that the *Thomasschule Music Library* possessed and the lack of further points of confirmation. Only the period from February 15 to June 28, 1733 (*Sexagesimae* to the 4th Sunday after Trinity) can be excluded due to the period of mourning after the death of the Elector Friedrich August I, a period during which no figural music was performed in the churches.

That this cycle was still available for performance in Leipzig before 1750 and that it remained among the music that Bach controlled can be seen from another connection provided by Bach's cousin and private secretary, Johann Elias Bach, who stated:

A cantata cycle by Stölzel. Many of them have parts in addition to the original score. Epiphany Feast Day, 6th Sunday after Epiphany, the 10th, 14th, 15th, 17th, 20th and 27th Sunday after Trinity and 2 cantatas are incomplete.

A cantata cycle by Stölzel. Many cantatas have parts as well. Missing from this cycle are the Epiphany Feast Day and the 27th Sunday after Trinity.

It is not clear yet just how Stölzel's cantata cycle from 1731/32 came to Leipzig. Perhaps the music director at the Leipzig *Neukirche*, Georg Balthasar Schott (1686-1736), who was a friend/acquaintance of J. S. Bach, was an intermediary in this matter. Schott moved to Gotha in March 1729 where he had been called to become the next City Cantor. Recently research has been able to document an active correspondence between Bach and his colleagues (cantors and organists). Strangely enough, Johann Gottlob Immanuel Breitkopf has no announcements of any church cantatas by Stölzel for sale in his non-thematic catalogues of 1761, 1764, and 1770. Based on a text booklet discovered in St. Petersburg, Tatjana Schabalina was able to prove that Stölzel's Passion-Oratorio "Ein Lämmlein geht und trägt die Schuld" was performed on Good Friday (April 23) 1734 in the *Thomaskirche* in Leipzig. This is the place to point out the existence of a set of parts which is possibly linked to this performance and which also was part of the *Thomasschule Music Library*. The following entry appears in Ernst Führer's catalogue of 1920/21 on p. 484:

Stölzel, Gottfried Heinrich

Oratorio for Good Friday: "Ein Lämmlein geht und trägt die Schuld"

S (1), A (1), T (1), B (1); Instrumental Parts, Organ (1); Call number: D 88

The earlier catalogue of the *Thomasschule Music Library* prepared by Christian Theodor Weinlig (1823) notes the same work as follows:

Chapter 1 Sacred Music mit Instrumental Accompaniment

Fascicle 1. 5. Oratorios or larger cantatas for Holy Week

Scores with a simple set of parts

1 by Doles

1 by Stölzel

1 by Telemann

2 by unknown composers

Thus the *Thomasschule* had in its music library the score and parts for the Stölzel *Oratorio-Passion* or *Good Friday Oratorio* until 1823. Robert Eitner in 1903 noted this work as follows:

“Stölzel, Gottfried Heinrich...In Leipzig *Thomasschule*, Mss as score and parts, *Passion-Oratorio*: Ein Lämmlein -...”

Other works which document Bach's use of Stölzel's compositions include his extensive re-working of the tenor aria “Dein Kreuz, o Bräutigam meiner Seelen” from the *Good Friday Oratorio* “Die leidende und am Kreuz sterbende Liebe Jesu” (Gotha, 1720). Bach's second *Klavierbüchlein* (1725) for *Anna Magdalena Bach* contains the aria “Bist du bei mir” from Stölzel's opera *Diomedes* (1718).

The performances of numerous works by Stölzel like the complete *Good Friday Oratorio* and possibly two of his cantata cycles shed new light on Bach's duties as cantor in the years following 1730. It is known that Bach had already begun to perform works by other composers as early as February, 1726. This tendency became even stronger in his later years. Which long-term changes took place in Bach's performance repertoire, we are now only beginning to understand. Whether Bach himself composed a complete 4th or even 5th yearly cantata cycle must therefore come into question even more now. By performing works by other composers, Bach could at least be temporarily relieved from some of his duties as composer and performer of church music so that he could pursue other musical interests and attempt to obtain invitations for private trips, organ

examinations or performances outside of Leipzig. It is possible that he changed his mind regarding the nature of his duties in Leipzig and redefined them entirely so that his church music duties were no longer among his primary objectives.

When C. P. E. Bach assumed his duties as cantor of the *Johanneum* and music director of the five main churches in Hamburg in March, 1768, he waited until four weeks later to present a pasticcio based primarily on a cantata by Gottfried August Homilius. This was a composition which, for the most part, was not even composed by C. P. E. Bach.

His father, however, used such 'spare' time to prepare particularly ambitious works like the *Christmas Oratorio* (1734/35), the *Ascension Oratorio* (1735) or the revised version of the *St. Matthew Passion* (1736). Only additional text booklets will reveal whether Bach primarily performed works by other composers over long periods. In 1726 Bach followed a plan to alternate his own works with those of his cousin from Meiningen. For the 1730s one is forced to consider at least that a similar method was followed. Finally, one should not exclude the possibility that compositions by other composers often required fewer musicians and were easier to perform like the cantatas in Stölzel's "Name-Book" cycle. These could have been performed by the 2nd choir conducted by a prefect. This might correspond with Bach's declaration in a letter of complaint dated August 15, 1736 where he points out to the Leipzig City Council that "the figural music performed by the 1st choir is mainly composed by me." [*Bach-Dokumente I*, no. 34.]

Appendix

G. H. Stölzel's Cantata Cycle "Christ's Namebook"