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Russell Stinson, ed. *Bach Perspectives I* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995. xii, 226 pp. ISBN 0-8032-1042-6 (hardcover)

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In *J.S. Bach and the German Motet*, Daniel Melamed places Bach's motets in historic context, proposes a new chronology, and persuasively restores to the "authentic" category certain motets that have previously been classified as "dubious." Melamed's book gives us a new picture of the place of the motet in Bach's *oeuvre*, and underscores the fact that Bach's motets have not been dealt with very kindly by scholars. Ordinary reference works are not in agreement about the number of motets, their chronological order, their status as authentic or doubtful pieces, or their purpose and function within the Lutheran liturgy; moreover, there is disagreement about instrumental doubling of the vocal parts. Most recordings include only the six familiar motets: "Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied," BWV 225, "Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf," BWV 226, "Jesu, meine Freude," BWV 227, "Fürchte dich nicht," BWV 228, "Komm, Jesu, komm," BWV 229, and "Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden," BWV 230.

J.S. Bach and the German Motet is a revised version of Melamed's dissertation, and is thoroughly documented with proper footnotes and copious musical examples—including many facsimile pages from Bach's manuscripts. In addition, there is an appendix giving lengthy accounts of the motet by Bach's contemporaries. Theorists such as Mattheson, Scheibe, and Walther discuss the kinds of texts that were deemed suitable for use in motets, and they give specific information about the musical style that is appropriate for the genre. These documents, cited in their German originals, serve as the basis for Melamed's first chapter. He uses the documents, in his own careful translation, to trace the history of the motet in Germany in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He shows that Bach was continuing a long-standing tradition when he composed his own motets, and when he chose to use motet style for movements of larger works, such as the Mass in B minor.

According to Melamed, the motets of Bach have, since Spitta's time, been regarded as offshoots of the cantata, and they have been thought to have been strongly influenced by the organ chorale. Melamed insists that when Bach gave the title "Motet" to a composition or a movement, he had a particular kind of piece in mind: one that combined Biblical *Sprüche* or *Dicta* and chorale stanzas, and employed a double choir of voices accompanied by instruments *colla parte* as well as basso continuo. However, there could also be a single choir, and there could be some independent treatment of the doubling instruments. Melamed documents Bach's own use of the term "Motet" as it appears in his autograph scores. The results are summarised in several useful tables.

One of the difficulties with the Bach motet is that only two of the familiar motets (BWV 225–230) exist in Bach's autograph, and scholars and performers have used information from these two autographs in a negative sense. The

original instrumental parts for BWV 226 are a case in point. Since these are the only original extant parts, scholars have argued that the other motets were either sung a cappella, or with just a basso continuo accompaniment. Melamed observes that “it seems almost perverse to take the survival of instrumental parts for BWV 226 as evidence against instrumental doubling in all Bach’s other motets” (p. 105).

Melamed shows—again by compelling manuscript evidence—that Bach composed and performed motets throughout his career, and did not, as has been claimed by Spitta and the majority of writers since Spitta’s time, compose motets only in Leipzig. The first music by Bach to be printed was the libretto and parts for “Gott is mein König,” BWV 71, in 1708. In the libretto and Bach’s autograph wrapper for the parts it is called “Motetto.” Towards the end of his life, Bach began to collect excellent specimens of the seventeenth-century German motet which he revised and “orchestrated” for performance in Leipzig. Some of this repertoire is still preserved and is known as the *Alt-Bachisches Archiv*—a collection of motets by members of the Bach family assembled by J.S. Bach. It was dispersed after his death and at least one share went to C.P.E. Bach. Melamed devotes his last three chapters to the *Alt-Bachisches Archiv*, and they are fascinating reading.

That said, Melamed’s book requires careful reading for he refers his reader backward and forward, sometimes to a fuller treatment of a point under discussion, and sometimes to an example or a table. He takes it for granted that his reader is familiar with the repertoire; it is useful to have scores at hand.

There are few typographical errors. On p. 78, the second sign should be *alla breve*; and on p. 201, line 7, read “Leib” for “Lieb.” Melamed occasionally uses informal words (“stuck,” “gripe,” “tricky,” and “crazy”), and sometimes uses words that look wrong: “interweaved” (p. 16) as a past participle struck me as odd. Aside from these few details, the book is excellent. It makes a valuable contribution to our knowledge of Bach and his music.

Bach Perspectives is the first volume of a new series devoted to the music of J.S. Bach. The individual essays, written by authorities on his music, range from a penetrating study of the chronology and style of the *Orgelbüchlein* to an illuminating review of Christoph Wolff’s *Bach: Essays on His Life and Music*,¹ which has become an invaluable reference work for those interested in Bach’s compositional process.

The six essays in this volume deal with various aspects of Bach’s music: chronology, style, compositional technique, borrowing, symbolism, form, and so forth. They are geared to the needs and interests of Bach scholars, and while some are very detailed and technical, all present information of interest to the general reader. The book is handsomely printed, there are many useful musical examples and facsimile pages, and, best of all, the footnotes are printed at the bottom of the relevant pages. The volume appears to have been edited with scrupulous care; there are no typographical errors at all.

¹ Published by the Harvard University Press, 1991.

In his essay "Composition and Improvisation in the School of J.S. Bach," David Schulenberg posits that Bach and his contemporaries taught and learned composition by improvising over figured and unfigured basses; they "composed" fugues, sets of variations, chorale preludes and interludes, as well as fantasies, "realising" such pieces by using thoroughbass techniques. Schulenberg illustrates his essay with many interesting excerpts from pieces by Bach, Handel, C.P.E. Bach, and other composers. He examines well-known works—including the three-part Ricercar, BWV 1079, and the Chromatic Fantasy, BWV 903—and finds that they must be considered as written-down improvisations. This essay will be useful both to the analyst and performer of Bach's keyboard music, and it is likely that it represents only the tip of the iceberg. Schulenberg will undoubtedly expand upon this fruitful topic.

In his essay "The Compositional History of Bach's *Orgelbüchlein* Reconsidered," Russell Stinson redates the chorale settings of this famous collection, and discusses matters that have, of course, been considered previously, but not with such minute attention. For example, he observes the characteristic features of Bach's musical hand; how he draws his clefs and signatures, his half and whole notes, and how these change perceptibly from year to year. Stinson also finds deliberate the pairing of chorale preludes. For example, the pair "Der Tag, der ist so freudenreich," BWV 605, and "Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her," BWV 606, form a "two-entry group on liturgical, graphological, and stylistic grounds. It would follow that they were not only entered in direct succession but composed at about the same time as well" (p. 57f.). In addition, Stinson points out stylistic features that link settings to a particular year.

It is important to note that Stinson has been able to move the compositional dates for about a third of the settings of the *Orgelbüchlein* back some five or six years; he has determined that the collection was begun in 1708—many years earlier than scholars have believed. As a result of Stinson's redating, the chronology of Bach's earliest keyboard works, which has always been problematic, will have to be entirely rethought. Since the B-flat Major Capriccio, BWV 992 has lost its once secure date of 1704—thanks to Christoph Wolff's research it is now to be dated as 1703 or earlier²—many of Bach's very early works will now have to be moved back to the closing years of the seventeenth century.

Michael Marissen's essay "Concerto Styles and Significations in Bach's First Brandenburg Concerto" focuses on how Bach composed this piece not only to please the listener, but also to comment on eighteenth-century society and its values. For example, in the course of the first movement, the "aristocratic" *corni da caccia* move away from their hunting signals and lose their social identity, becoming gradually assimilated into the more neutral style of the rest of the ensemble. Again, in the trios that alternate with the Menuet, the

²Christoph Wolff, "The Identity of the 'Fratro Dilettissimo' in the Capriccio in B-flat Major, and Other Problems of Bach's early Harpsichord Works," in *The Harpsichord and Its Repertoire: Proceedings of the International Harpsichord Symposium Utrecht 1990* (Utrecht: STIMU Foundation for Historical Performance Practice, 1992), 145–56.

“Polish Soloist”—the violino piccolo—does not get a solo, not even in the Polonaise! Marissen’s thorough analysis of this concerto reveals how Bach adapted Vivaldi’s concerto style to suit his own purposes. The essay is both witty and engaging, and Marissen’s arguments are well presented.

Eric Chafe’s contribution “*Anfang und Ende: Cyclic Recurrence in Bach’s Cantata, Jesu, nun sei gepreiset, BWV 41,*” is concerned with allegory and metaphor in Cantata 41. In this cantata for New Year’s Day, Bach takes as his point of departure the Alpha and Omega of his text. C Major, the tonic, is both Alpha and Omega, and by contrasting the home key and its particular motifs with other keys, Bach makes this aspect of the libretto “speak” in music. Chafe’s essay is imbued with theology and symbolism, and he brings both of these to bear in his remarkable discussion of Cantata 41.

Stephen Crist’s “The Question of Parody in Bach’s Cantata *Preise dein Glücke, gesegnetes Sachsen, BWV 215*” gives us a fascinating glimpse into Bach’s workshop in October 1734, where the cantata was composed within the space of three days. It was performed almost before the ink was dry. Crist examines the manuscript material of the cantata to determine its interior history and to see what parody techniques were used in its composition. Those who have written about this cantata have never been in agreement about which movements were newly composed and which borrowed. Crist sorts it out and shows, quite convincingly, that Bach composed most of the new movements at white-hot speed, thinking of better rhythms, better musical motifs, and even better instrumentation as he was waiting for the ink to dry on the recto side of the page he had just filled. Crist provides facsimiles of four recto sides where the composer has sketched out the continuation. In one movement, Bach entered 9/8 as the metre-signature, but changed it to 6/8 as he started to write down the violin parts. Crist’s conclusions about Cantata 215 are both stimulating and convincing.

In his essay “The Perfectibility of J.S. Bach, or Did Bach Compose the Fugue on a Theme of Legrenzi, BWV 574a?” James Brokaw concludes that BWV 574a is a late eighteenth-century piece modelled on BWV 574, and that it has absolutely no claim to authenticity. The anonymous arranger decided to give Bach a few composition “lessons” as he reworked Bach’s piece to conform to late eighteenth-century standards. (Brokaw also shows that the same person also “improved” many of the preludes and fugues of the Well-Tempered Clavier.) This anonymous arranger adds voices to BWV 574, rewrites the figuration, and alters cadential formulas to prevent the performer from adding any ornaments, even at the conventional places. Brokaw’s argument proves beyond doubt that the piece was not composed by J.S. Bach.

Bach Perspectives closes with two reviews. The first, by Stephen Crist, is a review of Christoph Wolff’s *Bach: Essays on His Life and Music*. This book has become a standard reference since it was published in 1991; indeed, many of the essays in *Bach Perspectives* are directly indebted to Wolff’s research. Crist’s sympathetic overview of the book, and his clear synopsis of the essays will be helpful to those who have only studied particular essays in the volume.

David Schulenberg finds Robert Hill's *Keyboard Music from the Andreas Bach Book and the Möller Manuscript* to be disappointing.³ There are mistakes in pitches, ornament-signs, accidentals, beaming, and voice-leading in Hill's edition, and some of these errors seem to be taken over from previous editions of the repertoire. Nonetheless, Schulenberg welcomes the volume for the insights it provides into late seventeenth-century keyboard music, and for the "broad view that it opens onto the little-known musical world of early eighteenth-century Germany" (p. 213). He thinks that "reissued with corrections or provided with a thorough and accurate list of errata" (p. 213), the volume would be much improved. An incomplete list of errata is provided at the end of his review.

Schulenberg prefaces his review with a disquisition on editing music. He questions the fact that Hill accepts his two sources at face value; however, others who have edited some of the same repertoire from these sources, notably Georg von Dadelsen⁴ and Hartwig Eichberg,⁵ have also let questionable passages stand. In my opinion, Hill's edition is no worse than some of the readings presented in the *Neue-Bach Ausgabe*, Series V. For example, Wolff's edition of the Goldberg Variations is so flawed as to be unusable, as I have pointed out elsewhere.⁶

Bach Perspectives I is a splendid beginning for a new series. Its contributors share their new discoveries and question facts that have been accepted as truth for more than a hundred years.

Erich Schwandt

Stewart Pollens. *The Early Pianoforte*. Cambridge Musical Texts and Monographs. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. xx, 297 pp. ISBN 0-521-41725-5 (hardcover).

This book debunks two major myths believed by many, i.e., that Cristofori invented the piano in 1700, and that the harpsichord was the forerunner of the piano. To do this, it traces the history of the pianoforte from its earliest known mention in 1440 through to 1763, and proves that Cristofori was the rediscoverer and popularising agent of the hammer-action principle, rather than its creator. A discussion of the copies of Cristofori instruments found in Portugal, Spain, and Germany, and the parallel development of independent piano mechanisms in Germany and France follows.

As the Associate Conservator for the Department of Musical Instruments in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Pollens has ample training and experience for the subject matter, which is based on his own thorough examinations of all

³Published by Harvard University Press, 1991.

⁴See his two-volume edition of Bach's early harpsichord works: *Fantasien, Präluden und Fugen* (Munich: Henle, 1970), and *Suiten, Sonaten, Capriccios und Variationen* (Munich: Henle, 1975).

⁵See his edition in the *Neue-Bach Ausgabe* V/10.

⁶Erich Schwandt, "Some Questions Concerning the Edition of the 'Goldberg Variations' in the *Neue-Bach Ausgabe*," *Performance Practice Review* 3, no. 1 (1990): 58-69.