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# *D*iscussing *BACH*

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Bach and the *Thomaskantorat*

## Authorised Transcript

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## Bach and the *Thomaskantorat*

Authorised transcript\* of a live video discussion with  
Steven Zohn (SZ), Barbara M. Reul (BMR), Ursula Kramer (UK),  
and Michael Maul (MM)

Moderated by Ruth Tatlow (RT). Recorded on Wednesday 18 August 2021



STEVEN ZOHN | BARBARA M. REUL | URSULA KRAMER | MICHAEL MAUL

discuss

*Bach and the Thomaskantorat*

\* The following transcript has been edited and expanded for clarity and will at times differ from the spoken live discussion.<sup>1</sup>

RT Welcome to *Discussing Bach*, the multi-media publication produced by Bach Network.

My name is Ruth Tatlow, and I am co-editor with Barbara Reul of this issue 'Bach and the *Thomaskantorat*' [St Thomas' Cantorship].

I am delighted to welcome our four experts: Steven Zohn, Barbara Reul, Ursula Kramer, and Michael Maul, who over the next thirty minutes or so will be sharing new research ideas and exploring this topic for us.

We tend to think of Johann Sebastian Bach as **the** cantor of St Thomas in Leipzig, but things were not so self-evident in 1722 and 1723. Bach auditioned for the

post on 7 February 1723, but before that, three other candidates had been invited to apply. These were: Telemann, Fasch, and Graupner.

Without further ado, let's hear from Steve about the first candidate: Telemann.

SZ Thank you very much for inviting me; it's a pleasure to be here. For many people, the one biographical fact they know about Georg Philipp Telemann [1681–1767] is that he was offered and declined the position of city music director and cantor of the *Thomaskirche* [St Thomas Church] in Leipzig, paving the way for Bach's acceptance of the same position. The facts are well known. After less than a year as director of music and cantor of the *Johanneum* School in Hamburg, Telemann had become dissatisfied with his job. His salary and benefits were unsatisfactory; there was too much teaching; his public concertising angered the Hamburg senate; he had to hire extra church singers at his own expense; and he clashed with the city printer.

So, when the Leipzig job became available following the death of Johann Kuhnau [1660–1722] on 9 June 1722, Telemann did not hesitate to throw his hat into the ring. As the favoured candidate, he auditioned with two cantatas in the *Thomaskirche* on 9 August, was offered the position two days later, and signed a letter of intent before returning to Hamburg later that month. Until recently, the two audition cantatas were thought to be unidentifiable. But the German researcher Marc-Roderich Pfau has suggested some likely candidates. Here we see one of these: the cantata *Ich muß auf den Bergen weinen und heulen* [TVWV 1:851], as copied and performed in Frankfurt a year after Telemann's Leipzig audition. Only the text of the second cantata has survived.

Back in Hamburg, Telemann wrote separately to the senate and school board. In both letters, he contrasted his present circumstances with the more favourable ones in Leipzig and asked for his dismissal. Here is Telemann's first letter, dated 3 September. This caught the senators' attention, and when they decided to retain Telemann at all costs, he turned down the Leipzig offer on 6 November.

Telemann's spurning of Leipzig is surely one of the most famous 'No's in all of music history. But what might have happened if he had said 'Yes'? How would accepting the Leipzig offer have shaped his career and those of others – especially Bach? And what can this alternate reality tell us about the choices that Bach made as the actual Leipzig music director?

My point of departure for this modest thought experiment is an imagined group of letters between Telemann and his friend Johann Georg Pisendel [1688–1755]. Pisendel was *Konzertmeister* [concert master] at the Dresden court and, not incidentally, a long-time acquaintance of Bach. The letters were all discovered – that is to say, written – by me. In the historical-fictional essay that accompanies this video, I try to enhance the fabricated letters' credibility through references to real people, places, and music, and by citing real scholarly studies.<sup>2</sup> But my goal is

not to deceive, nor quite to achieve what the humourist Stephen Colbert calls 'truthiness'. Now, I realise that some may be inclined to dismiss this exercise as 'fake news'. But I would argue that our reliance as historians on historical fiction is deeper than we may at first consider.

Music-historical fiction, in particular, has long been popular. Consider these recent novels, the first two of which are notable for having Bach-related plots. Now, I have not written a novel, but telling a story about Telemann as *Thomaskantor* does involve devising a plot. So, in my telling, the composer shapes his position in ways familiar from his actual career in Frankfurt and Hamburg. Unlike Bach, Telemann becomes music director at the city's *Neue Kirche* [New Church], a position he held in his university days. He also gives concerts in the city's large private gardens – something Bach apparently never did. Here we see Apel's Garden around 1720, and the Großbösicher Garden around 1730. Given Telemann's connection to the celebrated Leipzig poet Christiane Mariane von Ziegler [1695–1760], I imagine that he commissions from her librettos to an entire church cantata cycle, rather than the nine librettos that Bach commissioned.

But the real fun is deciding what happens to Bach. He initially remains a court musician, transferring from Cöthen to Gotha, where he writes operas for the first time. He replaces the Capellmeister Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel [1690–1749], whose talent and experience make him ideally suited to succeed Telemann at Hamburg. Bach's varied activities at Gotha eventually allow him to succeed Johann David Heinichen [1683–1729] as Dresden Capellmeister, and finally to replace Stölzel at Hamburg. Thus, Telemann's decision in this tale to accept the Leipzig offer leads to new professional possibilities for Bach, who opens the door when opportunity knocks.

RT Thank you so much, Steve. That was an absolutely fascinating thought exercise, and it gives us so many new ideas. We're going to come back to this at the end, but for now I'd like to ask: Barb, Ursula, Michael, do you have any comments?

BMT I'm going to start if you don't mind. Sorry, Michael!

MM No, no, go ahead!

BMR Go ahead? Thank you. I think the thought experiment is actually a really good one because we hardly ever think about what could have happened, and we only rely on facts. And I had never actually thought about what could have happened to, quote-unquote, 'my own' composer if he had said 'Yes' to other *Thomaskantorat*-like positions. So, thank you for opening a door for us to think about that, Steve.

SZ Sure.

RT Michael?

MM Yes, I wanted to say almost the same. But what I like most of your little fantasy story is the idea or the question, 'What did Bach do after Telemann took over the *Thomaskantorat*?' And the idea that he went to Gotha is nice – love it! – but on the other hand, look, we know that Bach applied for a job in Hamburg just one year earlier in 1721 [recte: 1720], for the organist position at St Jacob's Church. So, I am quite sure that Bach would have applied for Telemann's position in Hamburg after he went to Leipzig, and if we remember that Bach had this in mind in 1721, why should he not have thought of becoming, sooner or later, the successor of [Joachim] Gerstenbüttel [1647–1721], the music director of the town? Whether he would have got the job or not, or if he had any chance against Stölzel, I have no idea, I'm not sure. But at least a year earlier, he seems to have impressed a lot of people when he performed at the organ and also, obviously, performed his famous Cantata (BWV) 21, *Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis*.

RT Thank you. Thank you, Michael, thank you, Barb, for these comments. We'll continue the discussion. Now, I want to keep the discussion rolling and the timeline rolling, and I have a little summary here. So far, we have the death of *Thomaskantor* Kuhnau on 9 June 1722. We then have Telemann auditioning for the vacant post on 9 August 1722. He was offered the post on 11 August of that year and then he turned it down on 6 November 1722. Let's now proceed to Barb to hear about Fasch as potential Thomaskantor.

BMR Thank you, Ruth.

Where was Johann Friedrich Fasch in June 1722?<sup>3</sup> The 34-year-old Thuringian worked as resident composer for Count Wenzel Morzin [1676–1737] in Prague. He maintained the best orchestra in Central Europe and had none other than Vivaldi on his payroll. According to Fasch's autobiographical essay, his *Lebenslauf* [lit. 'course of life'] from 1757, Morzin was also a generous employer. He offered 'good food, lodgings, wood, free lighting, ... a cash salary of three hundred Gulden', and the opportunity to receive 'applause from the local nobility'. Nevertheless, Fasch seemed to be ready to give up a dream job in favour of Leipzig, to which he had strong ties just like Telemann, his composer idol, and [Christoph] Graupner [1683–1760], his composition teacher. In 1701, Fasch had been the first student recruited by the late Kuhnau; in 1708, Fasch had founded and directed Leipzig's 'Second *Collegium Musicum*'; and he had performed with the local opera orchestra before leaving town in 1713.

Life had other plans for Fasch in 1722, however. He writes: 'I had spent about one and a half years there [in Prague] when I received a letter from the Capellmeister of Gotha, Herr Stölzel, [indicating that] upon the recommendation of the Duke [of Saxony-Gotha-Altenburg] [...], the Prince of Zerbst had requested my service'. One wonders how Fasch reacted to being headhunted by his 'friend of the heart' or 'Hertzens Freunde' Stölzel. Had he told Fasch that 'Capell Director' Kuch had left Zerbst after impregnating a local girl?

No letters mentioned in the *Lebenslauf* are extant, so we don't know why Fasch declined the princely job offer, only that he did so twice. Perhaps, he had contractual obligations to Count Morzin; or Fasch did not want to be stuck in the middle of nowhere; today, Anhalt-Zerbst would be part of the German state of Saxony-Anhalt; or maybe he was just not keen on working long hours at a busy court. Or was Fasch's real reason for stalling [his wish to obtain] the vacant *Thomaskantor* post? His name was given first on the list of applicants which emphasises his interest. Stölzel's third letter to Fasch in Prague could have informed him about Telemann being offered the position. It was accompanied by a personal message from Fasch's father-in-law. He pressured the widower and single dad greatly to accept the post to resume his parental duties.

On 29 September 1722, Fasch became the new Capellmeister of Anhalt-Zerbst. Soon after, he was contacted by the Leipzig selection committee: 'I had been in Zerbst for just over 8 weeks when I received two letters, one after another, from the late Herr *Hofrath* Lange in Leipzig [...] to audition there for the vacant Cantor position, since Herr Telemann had declined the offer'. The Leipzig officials had decided to approach Fasch, quote, 'a skilful person', as he arguably fit the bill of the, quote, 'multifaceted municipal Capellmeister' they were looking for. In the *Lebenslauf* Fasch responded with: 'However, it was impossible for me to leave my most gracious employer'. Lange shared a very different reason with the committee: Fasch was not willing to teach at his alma mater.

Lange does not tell us why, but according to Michael Maul, the *Thomasschule* [St Thomas School] was known as the 'charity school of the poor' in the early 18th century and 'said to be in such disarray that it could scarcely get any worse'.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, I feel that Fasch would have made a wonderful *Thomaskantor*. He was a family-oriented, peace-loving man of faith with outstanding musical skills, excellent leadership qualities, and a keen interest in sharing his compositions with others for free – a remarkably modern concept reminiscent of, for instance, Bach Network granting open access to everything on its website, including this issue of *Discussing Bach*. In May 1723, J. S. Bach became the next *Thomaskantor*. Interestingly, the court of Anhalt-Cöthen never replaced him. Instead, they paid Fasch for composing at least 30 large-scale vocal works between 1732 and 1755. This, I would argue, qualifies Fasch for the title 'Oberhofkapellmeister [highest-ranking court Capellmeister] of Anhalt'.<sup>5</sup> Thank you.

- RT     Thank you very much, Barb. That's fascinating. Comments from the floor?
- UK     I'd like to ask a question, Barb. Firstly, thank you so much for your fascinating paper. But I would like to know, what do you think: this family reason we heard about in the third letter, could this have been the real reason why he withdrew the application for Leipzig?
- BMR    Possibly, Ursula. So, I reckon that on his way to Zerbst – and we don't really know when he left Prague, just that the Count was kind of upset that he had left – that

on his way, he would have gone to Suhl to pick up one of his single sisters who would have been able to help him to look after the little daughter. And I think his father-in-law was just really embarrassed that he had a son-in-law who was handed a capellmeister position, something, you know, of social and professional prestige that other people would have, to put it bluntly, killed for. And he gets it served on a silver platter, and he says 'No'. So, I think, if nothing else, he really annoyed his relatives, and looking after his children – and he didn't have many – was really important to him. So, thanks for the question.

RT Yes, thank you very much. Let's move forward now; let's have another summary. So, we've had the frontrunner Telemann, turning down the post on 6 November 1722; Fasch, having been considered from the very first and then reconsidered, reconsidering it and turning it down. So, let's move on to Ursula now to hear what Graupner's role in the whole *Thomaskantor* selection process was.

UK Thank you so much, Ruth.

When examining the minutes of the Leipzig Council documenting the negotiations for the replacement of the *Thomaskantorat* as a whole, it is noticeable that the Graupner case was the most extensively documented. The application of the Hesse-Darmstadt court Capellmeister is the subject of far more documents and correspondence than Telemann, Fasch, or Bach.<sup>6</sup>

The question is: Why? What can possibly be gleaned from this fact about his standing as a candidate?

The facts are known: Graupner was the third and last of the external candidates after Telemann and Fasch, all of whom dropped out for various reasons before J. S. Bach was finally appointed.

For the town council, this meant the situation became increasingly urgent to find a positive solution for Leipzig after the previous rejections. That is why they were apparently prepared to go for a difficult candidate like Graupner. But why difficult?

Graupner had – as is evident from an indirect comment made in the council minutes – also enclosed a justification for the desired relocation in which he may have expressed concerns about how such a move could be realised. The actual letter, however, has not been preserved.

What reasons might he have given as motivation for his application? First and foremost, he would likely have stressed his ties to Leipzig. Leipzig was the city where he himself had received his education as a pupil of the *Thomasschule*. As an insider, he knew what to expect. Additionally, he had experienced the city as a pulsating metropolis at the turn of the century, which also set the tone in terms of music – opera and *Collegia Musica* were experiencing a heyday. It is also possible that Graupner knew that at the time of the vacancy in 1722 there was still the intention to revive the opera activities, which had been discontinued in the

meantime. This might have given him the opportunity to resume his earlier preoccupation with writing music for the theatre. And, finally, Graupner – not unlike Bach – could also have had his children's later educational opportunities in mind since he himself had also attended Leipzig University.

However, the fact that his application was also a decision against Darmstadt is probably something he communicated less openly and directly. There was no doubt that he must have found the Darmstadt position increasingly disappointing. He had been engaged there as an opera composer in 1709, and the discontinuation of opera in 1719 must have been perceived by him as an artistic step backwards. This was accompanied by an increasing lack of prospects, especially as the Landgrave Ernst Ludwig [of Hesse-Darmstadt, 1667–1739] was clearly losing interest in court music. [Moreover,] the miserable payment morale of the court repeatedly caused great hardship for all musicians in Darmstadt.

As a result, Graupner was extremely keen to move to Leipzig. As the minutes of the council show, several recommendation letters were received in favour of Graupner – one of them by J[ohann] D[avid] Heinichen [1683–1729]. This suggests that Graupner had actively requested them. Graupner [had also] secretly travelled to Leipzig, pretending to visit relatives near Mainz. And what is particularly serious: Graupner committed a breach of loyalty to his Darmstadt employer by informing the Leipzig town council of impending difficulties. This speaks of his distance and alienation from the Hesse-Darmstadt court.

And indeed, after Graupner's successful audition, the Leipzig council used all available means to bring the proceedings to a positive conclusion, writing to his Darmstadt employer with arguments that they could only have known through Graupner himself. However, all that was to no avail, and Graupner had probably suspected this outcome from the very beginning. Ernst Ludwig tied him more firmly than ever to Darmstadt. And in Leipzig the way was clear for Bach.

RT Thank you, Ursula. That was fabulous. The plot thickens! Any immediate comments? In one respect, that segues immediately into Michael, to hear about Bach, but if people want to make a comment now about Graupner? Or shall we just...? Yes, let's go straight to Michael.

MM Okay, here we are. Yes, let's finish the story of how long it took to find a new *Thomaskantor*. I mean, for all of us today it seems totally logical that this long search period ended up with the appointment of Bach. But as we learned from Steven, Barb, and Ursula, it was really a very long road indeed. And now the road was clear, as Ursula mentioned. But yes, it's astonishing that the very first time the name of J. S. Bach turned up for as a candidate for the *Thomaskantorat* was not before the middle of January 1723. And even then, the town council was not really interested. There were many people in the town council saying, 'Do we really need one more candidate? Really?' And Bach was only invited to audition by the Leipzig town council because of the fact that they were unsure that Graupner



would be released by the Darmstadt Landgrave. And we know that he did a very good job [in his audition] with the performance of two cantatas on Sunday *Estomihi*, and that these two pieces pleased the audience, even though there were people who were rather sceptical about operatic and dramatic church music. Bach very carefully introduced theatrical effects into these two audition cantatas.

Yes, and then, I mean, the road was still not clear for him because everybody was waiting for the decision in Darmstadt. And it took two more months, until at least the middle of April, before the town council actually voted for Bach after Graupner had said, 'Sorry, I have to stay on in Darmstadt'. So, it was a lengthy process, and a hard decision for the town council to make. But the most interesting thing for me is [that] it was also a very hard decision for Bach himself. Yes, [there are] not many moments in Bach's life when we get a glimpse into his brain, but for this decision we do! That is, we have some documented insights from 1730 into what Bach was thinking. When he had been *Thomaskantor* for seven years, he wrote a letter to his former schoolmate Georg Erdmann, and said that it took him a full three months [in 1723] to decide to turn from being a capellmeister to a cantor. It was a very hard decision for him.

Now, on my slide I have given, in some respect, the pros and cons Bach might have had in mind when he made this final decision sometime between February and April 1723. So, on the one hand, we have the court of Cöthen, with a prince who was crazy about music, who spent tons of money on an excellent court orchestra, where Bach was the boss and was able to compose music which was, in many regards, really difficult to play, but brilliant. So, these were, perhaps [some of] the arguments for Cöthen. On the other hand, Bach knew that this prince spent a lot of money on music in spite of the fact that the prince didn't have much money. I mean, he was in danger of going bankrupt, and that's something Bach mentioned in the letter to his friend Erdmann. In 1721, the prince married a so-called '*amusa*', a woman who was not very interested in music. And I guess that was quite an incentive [for Bach] to leave Cöthen sooner or later. I mean, she died at the beginning of 1723, so maybe she was not the ultimate reason for Bach to take on the *Thomaskantorat*, but she was one of the reasons.

On the other hand, the fact that Bach was asking himself urgently, 'Do I really want to quit my job as the director of a professional orchestra in favour of being the music teacher in a school?', I mean, that he finally made the decision for the school sounds crazy. But it certainly makes sense because we know that the St Thomas School was far from a normal school. It was, in fact, a music school, and those kids were not between 8 and 14 years old; no, they were between the ages of 13 and 21 years, and so much, much older than [pupils at the *Thomasschule*] are today. And in this school, almost everything was focused on music. In terms of musical skills, it was maybe the best school in the whole of Protestant Germany, and I guess that was the reason why Bach finally said, 'Okay, I will take this job'. And, to come back to the goal of his life, there is something important that Bach mentioned earlier in 1708 when he left Mühlhausen for Weimar. In the letter to

the Mühlhausen town council he had said, 'I consider it the goal of my life, the "Endzweck", the meaning of my life to compose music to the honour of God – *Soli Deo Gloria*'. And Cöthen was not a very good place to do this because it was a Calvinist court, and Bach was really focused there on [composing] virtuosic, mainly instrumental music. But Leipzig, that was the centre for church music, and now composing cantatas could become the centre of his professional life. And, of course, we know that Bach had a growing family; [after the death of his first wife] he had remarried, and she was pregnant for most of the first ten years of their marriage, yes? All in all, she had [or, more precisely,] they had 13 children together, and Leipzig was of course, by far, the better place to raise a family. It provided many opportunities for his sons to study at the university; for Bach himself, he could teach many students; and sooner or later the possibility to have a *Collegium Musicum*, and perform at the coffeehouse, [etc.].

So, in short: after thinking about all those pros and cons, Leipzig was obviously the better alternative. I am quite happy that Bach made this decision because I mean, think about what would have happened if Bach had not done this, and maybe stayed on in Cöthen for years to come. I don't know what would have happened in that case. I mean, maybe he would have composed six additional Brandenburg concertos, but sooner or later he could have left Cöthen. The big question is: what would have been the next destination? I have no idea. But as a Leipziger, I am proud that Bach decided in favour of Leipzig. In a way, I'm a little bit pleased that Telemann, Graupner, and Fasch ultimately didn't go to Leipzig because that paved the way for Bach. On the other hand, I could have ended up as the artistic director of a Telemann Festival or Graupner Festival which would also have been interesting. But thankfully we got Bach, and we are happy with it. So, that's what I have to say. Thank you.

RT Thank you so much, Michael. That's fabulous, and it completes this exciting string of events. I'd now like to throw the floor open: any questions of any kind? You can take the discussion, and if not, I've got a supplementary question. So, has anybody got a question for now?

SZ Well, I have sort of a comment, but it might lead to some questions. And that is, you know, one often hears [something] like 'How could Bach be the fourth choice of the Leipzig council for this position?'. And, of course without denigrating the other three candidates, I think that's the wrong question. Rather, the question is like, why was Bach chosen as number four? I mean, the other three candidates all had strong Leipzig connections, or they were better suited to the job in certain respects. Here's Bach, a court composer with limited experience writing church music – thought more of as an organist. And the fact that he came after Telemann, Fasch, and Graupner I think speaks very highly to his reputation because they were other people in Germany who had more of the kind of experience that the town council was looking for. So, really, I think we shouldn't be disappointed that Bach was fourth, but we should be, in a way, proud that he

was selected after these candidates who really had a foot in the door, in the way that he did not.

UK Yes, yes.

MM I totally agree, Steven. He didn't have these strong ties to Leipzig, of course, completely different from Fasch, Graupner, and Telemann. [Bach was] the only candidate who didn't study at Leipzig University and who didn't study at a university in general. But at least he had certain connections to Leipzig. Keep in mind that in December 1717, he was in Leipzig and examined the organ at St Paul's Church. So, I guess that was maybe not the real reason why the Leipzig town council finally voted for him but at least it is possible that in 1717 – maybe when he was in town – he learned about the quality of this boys' choir. And I think also that he had two people who told him a lot about the opportunities in Leipzig long before he arrived in Leipzig. You have to keep in mind that there were two members of [Bach's] Weimar court orchestra who were former *Thomaner* [students at St Thomas School] under Kuhnau and under [Johann] Schelle [1648–1701]. Bach's close friend, Adam Immanuel Weldig, was a singer at the Weimar court. He had been a prefect [at the *Thomasschule*] in the 1680s. And Bach later wrote in his letter to Georg Erdmann, 'Finally, I made the decision to come to become *Thomaskantor* because someone described this position to me as "*favorable*" – as a perfect place.<sup>7</sup> I guess, these former boarders of St Thomas School were members of the Weimar court orchestra, and maybe that helped. On the other hand, I guess it was an extraordinary twist of fate that when the town council was really under pressure to find a final candidate, in February and March 1723, they took this person who had no ties [to Leipzig], who had never been a boarder at St Thomas School or a university student. So, it was a combination of several fortuitous circumstances that caused Bach ultimately to end up there. And we must not forget that we are focusing on only four candidates today, when in fact there were applications from ten or more candidates: cantors from several Saxon towns, middle-sized, small-sized; there was also another kind of *Capelldirektor*, the *Capellmeister* of Merseburg, [Georg Friedrich] Kaufmann [1679–1735] – they all applied. And my impression is also that Bach, in the middle of 1722, wasn't planning to apply because I take it for granted there were always a lot of rumours, gossip [going on] in music circles. And everybody knew immediately that the Leipzig town council had Telemann in mind, and so all the other musicians maybe thought in the beginning, 'Okay, they will take Telemann, and this chapter is over'. And then, finally, it turned out to be a longer process. And I'm quite sure that Bach, for the very first time, was thinking about applying for the job not before the end of 1722 because he knew that he didn't have these strong Leipzig ties compared with the others.

RT Thank you, that was great. Ursula, you had something to say?

UK Yes, more or less it has been stated already, and now, Michael also has talked about it: we shouldn't see Bach as the fourth candidate, the fourth choice, but as

the first of those without strong connections to Leipzig when [applying]. And I would like, if I may, just to ask a question of Michael: what do you think – how important was the fact that the opera activities could have possibly started up again; could [that] have been a motivation for Bach? Because to me, opera activities seem to be more closely related to a Capellmeister position than church music.<sup>8</sup>

MM Yes. As you know, in my book about the Baroque opera in Leipzig,<sup>9</sup> I proposed the idea that it [an interest in opera activities] was – especially for Telemann – one of the [stipulations required in the application] to apply. Because the situation was [as follows:] Leipzig had a public opera house, which [had] opened in 1693 and which had gone bankrupt in 1720. But the house was still there, and they urgently needed someone who had the money and who was prepared to embrace the risk of putting on performances again. And I'm quite sure that that was one of the reasons why some of the Leipzig town council members were focused on Telemann because they knew he was not only a wonderful composer and musician, but also an organiser of music. And maybe candidates like Fasch or Graupner – especially Graupner, who had composed operas for Hamburg – were, in a similar way, candidates from the opera camp. But Bach? I'm a little sceptical that he himself had this in mind, or [that] the town council was thinking, 'He's a *Capellmeister*; therefore, he would be able to compose operas', because, actually, there was no evidence or no point in his earlier career where he had identified himself as an opera composer. And I mean, in the end, they [the town council] appointed Bach, and he had the chance, actually, to ask, 'What's with the opera house? Can we find some sponsors to open it again? I would compose the piece [to go with it]!' But maybe he was, in a way, too shy to reopen this chapter. Maybe he didn't have strong connections to rich Leipzigers in his early years [as *Thomaskantor*], which [could have] helped him to start this discussion. And therefore – which is a pity, in a way – it was obviously never a question of whether, or not, he was interested or not in composing an opera. I mean, I like the idea that he may have entered the old opera house, yes, and said... realising: 'Okay, we need some money to fix some things in the building, but then [when] we start performing operas during the trade fairs, I can come up with fantastic, long pieces; my version of *Almira* or whatever, *Masaniello Furioso*'. But that, unfortunately, was obviously not on his mind. Maybe it wasn't that he was more shy than Telemann to organise something. I'm sure that Telemann – who had all the connections he needed – brought this to the table, right after he arrived in Leipzig [to audition]. But Bach, unfortunately, did not.

RT Well, I think on that happy note, it's probably time to wind up. We could continue talking about this for a long time. And I'm sure there will be many more discussions, in fact, in 2023 which will be celebrating Bach's entry into Leipzig. And there are, I know, going to be several conferences, and maybe we'll reconvene this panel then somewhere, which would be a very exciting thing. So, I just want to say thank you so much to you four for preparing and sharing your knowledge and all

in these different ways. We've heard so many different facts; we've heard fictional facts based on facts based on deep knowledge of facts; and this whole idea of interpreting history and interpreting facts raises so many questions as well – what we're really doing. So, I want to thank you so much for all your deep thought and for all that you've contributed. And, so, thank you very much.

And thank you for engaging with this topic, whether you are watching, listening, or reading. On our *Discussing Bach* web page, you will find a complete transcript of this discussion, short biographies of our speakers, a list of further reading, including new articles, and recommended listening, with links to compositions by our four composers. Thank you.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The spelling has been standardised following British English norms. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by the editors.
- <sup>2</sup> Steven Zohn, 'Telemann as *Thomaskantor*? An Historical Capriccio', *Discussing Bach* 3 (October 2021): 15–30.
- <sup>3</sup> Barbara M. Reul, "'It was impossible for me to leave' – Johann Friedrich Fasch and the *Thomaskantorat* in 1722', *Discussing Bach* 3 (October 2021): 31–44.
- <sup>4</sup> Michael Maul, *Bach's Famous Choir: The Saint Thomas School in Leipzig, 1212–1804*, trans. Richard Howe (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2018), 166; *ibid.*, 150, quotation from Mayor Falckner from 6 May 1701.
- <sup>5</sup> As first suggested by Maik Richter in 2017, see Barbara M. Reul, 'Sharing Resources: J.F. Fasch, J.S. Bach, and Princely Funeral Music at the Courts of Anhalt-Zerbst and Anhalt-Köthen', *Musicology Australia* 41/2 (2019): 106–120.
- <sup>6</sup> Ursula Kramer, "'was ihn zur mutation bewege': Christoph Graupner und seine Bewerbung um die Stelle des Leipziger Thomaskantorats', *Bach-Jahrbuch* 109 (2023) (projected).
- <sup>7</sup> Werner Neumann and Hans-Joachim Schulze, eds., *Bach-Dokumente* I (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1963), 67–68, Document 23. Bach writes: 'Es muste sich aber fügen, daß erwehnter Serenißimus sich mit einer Berenburgischen Princeßin vermählete, da es denn das Ansehen gewinnen wolte, als ob die musicalische Inclination bey besagtem Fürsten in etwas laulicht werden wolte, zumahln da die neue Fürstin schiene eine amusa zu seyn: so fügte es Gott, daß zu hiesigem Directore Musices u. Cantore an der Thomas Schule vociret wurde. Ob es mir nun zwar anfänglich gar nicht anständig seyn wolte, aus einem Capellmeister ein Cantor zu werden, weißwegen auch meine resolution auf ein vierthel Jahr trainirete, jedoch wurde mir diese station dermaßen favorable beschrieben, daß endlich (zumahln da meine Söhne denen studiis zu incliniren schienen) es in des Höchsten Nahmen wagete, u. mich nacher Leipzig begabe, meine Probe ablegete, u. so dann die mutation vornahme'. ('But it came to pass that the said Serenissimus married a Princess of Berenburg, and then it increasingly appeared as if the musical inclination of the said Prince was somewhat in danger, given that the new Princess seemed to be a totally unmusical individual; so, God made it that I should be called here to be music director and Cantor at the St Thomas School. At first, though, it did not seem at all proper to me to exchange my post of Capellmeister with that of a Cantor, which is why I weighed my decision for a quarter of a year. However, this post was described to me in such favourable terms, that finally (especially since my sons seemed to be inclined to take up [university] studies) I dared in the name of the Lord to travel to Leipzig, took my examination, and then made the change'.)
- <sup>8</sup> Michael Maul, 'New Evidence on Thomaskantor Kuhnau's Operatic Activities, Or: Could Bach have been allowed to compose an opera?', *Understanding Bach* 4 (2009): 9–20.
- <sup>9</sup> Michael Maul, *Barockoper in Leipzig (1693–1720)*, Rombach Wissenschaften, Reihe Voces 12 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 2009).

