

Telemann as *Thomaskantor*? An Historical Capriccio

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Introduction and Premise

In eighteenth-century music theory and practice, the term ‘capriccio’ often denoted something whimsical and extemporaneous, though it could also describe a more sober, worked-out piece that did not take itself too seriously. For Johann Gottfried Walther, capriccios were ‘sometimes much more pleasant to hear than that which is regulated and studied’, though they could also take the form of ‘keyboard fugues that are not particularly elaborated’.¹ My intention here in offering a musicological analogue to the capriccio is not merely to amuse or divert, then, but also to explore, in a semi-serious manner, the repercussions of a path not taken; of how a ‘Yes’ in place of a famous ‘No’ might have altered multiple trajectories.

That famous ‘No’ involves Georg Philipp Telemann declining an offer in 1722 to become *Director musices* (Director of Music) and *Thomaskantor* (Cantor at St Thomas Church) in Leipzig, the same position that was later offered to and accepted by Johann Sebastian Bach.² The series of events may be briefly recounted as follows. Having served less than a year as director of music at Hamburg’s five principal churches and cantor of the city’s *Johanneum* school, Telemann found himself dissatisfied with his new position on a number of counts: his salary and benefits were inferior to those he had left behind at Frankfurt; his teaching duties were irksome; he chafed at being censured by the senate for leading public

* I wish to express my thanks to Barbara M. Reul for conceiving the session ‘Telemann, Graupner, Fasch, and the *Thomaskantorat*’ at the Ninth Bach Dialogue Meeting (Madingley Hall, July 2019), which provided the impetus for this essay, and to Ellen Exner and Geoffrey Burgess for offering insightful comments that improved the final version.

¹ Johann Gottfried Walther, *Musicalisches Lexicon oder Musicalische Bibliothec* (Leipzig: Deer, 1732), 141: ‘Capriccio ... ist eben das, was ... manchemahl weit artiger zu hören ist, als was regulirtes und studirtes ... Daher werden auch die vors Clavier gesetzte, aber nicht sonderlich ausgearbeitete Fugen also tituliret’.

² For the relevant documentation concerning Telemann’s initial acceptance and eventual declining of the offer, see Marc-Roderich Pfau, ‘Telemanns Probe-Music für das Leipziger Thomaskantorat im Jahre 1722’, *Bach-Jahrbuch* 104 (2018): 95–111; and Joachim Kremer, ed., *Georg Philipp Telemanns Memorial an das Collegium Scholarchale vom 15. Oktober 1722* (Hamburg: Hamburger Telemann-Gesellschaft, 1993).

concerts; the inadequate state of the church choirs necessitated him hiring extra singers at his own expense; he was prevented by a city ordinance from writing wedding music on commission; the number of funerals for which he could provide music had declined; and he was at loggerheads with the city printer over who had the right to print librettos for his annual liturgical passions. Thus, when the Leipzig job became available following the death of Johann Kuhnau on 9 June 1722, Telemann did not hesitate to throw his hat into the ring. He was fondly remembered from his university days by the city council, which noted that he had since become ‘world famous on account of his music’.³ Telemann auditioned with two test cantatas in the *Thomaskirche* (St Thomas Church) on 9 August, was offered the position on 11 August, and signed a letter of intent before returning to Hamburg later that month.⁴ In communications with the Hamburg senate (3 September) and then with the *Collegium Scholarchale*, the school board that oversaw Hamburg’s cantorate (15 October), Telemann contrasted his present circumstances with the more favourable ones in Leipzig and asked for his dismissal. But when the Hamburg senate quickly decided to retain ‘this famous man and virtuoso’ at all costs, he turned down the Leipzig offer on 6 November.⁵

But what if Telemann had said ‘Yes’ to the Leipzig city council?

I wish to consider how, via a modest thought experiment cast as music-historical fiction, the composer’s hypothetical acceptance of the Leipzig offer might have shaped his career and exerted a ripple effect on the careers of Bach and other musicians of the time. I hope in the process to shine a revealing, though contrasting, light on the choices Bach made as the actual music director and *Thomaskantor*. My point of departure is an imagined group of newly ‘discovered’ letters between Telemann and his friend Johann Georg Pisendel, *Konzertmeister* (Concertmaster) at the Dresden court and, not incidentally, a long-time acquaintance of Bach. I have sought to enhance the truth-like feel of these letters as historical documents – their ‘truthiness’, to borrow a concept from the humourist Stephen Colbert by way of the musicologist Mary Hunter – through

³ *Dokumente zur Geschichte des Leipziger Thomaskantorats*, vol. 2: *Vom Amtsantritt Johann Sebastian Bachs bis zum Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Andreas Glöckner (Leipzig: Bach-Archiv, 2018), No. VIII/A 8: ‘wegen seiner Music, in der Welt bekannt’.

⁴ Pfau, ‘Telemanns Probe-Music’, 98–105, plausibly identifies the two test cantatas as *Ich muß auf den Bergen weinen und heulen*, BWV 1:851, and as the lost cantata *Wenn du es wüßtest, so würdest du auch bedenken*, BWV 1:deest. A manuscript score of the former cantata, copied in Frankfurt in 1723, is available in digitised form at <https://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/10482108> (accessed 16 August 2021).

⁵ ‘... dieser berühmte Mann und virtuose allhir möchte behalten’. Kremer, ed., *Georg Philipp Telemanns Memorial an das Collegium Scholarchale*, 2.

frequent references to real people, places, and musical works.⁶ Moreover, all my citations of secondary literature are entirely factual.

The only principal character I allow to remain in his historical place, so to speak, is Johann Georg Pisendel, Telemann's correspondent in these 'discovered' letters. But he, too, takes on new roles in the capriccio, helping to bring Bach to Dresden and then facilitating Bach's move to Hamburg. Although the letters between Pisendel and Telemann quoted below are entirely fictional, the two friends did in fact correspond extensively, and most probably over a period of many years. Surviving are four letters sent by the violinist to Hamburg between 16 April 1749 and 3 June 1752.⁷

Why a Capriccio?

I am aware that some readers will be tempted to dismiss what follows as self-indulgent storytelling of the fairy-tale variety. But I would counter that our reliance as historians, musicians, and listeners on historical fiction is deeper and more pervasive than we may at first consider. If the historian's work is to create, rather than to reproduce, the past by combining available information with imaginative yet informed speculation, then historical fiction may be regarded as an imagination-heavy point on a continuum of 'truth' about former times. To be sure, the fortunes of music-historical fiction in particular have declined since the genre's heyday in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when collections of musical anecdotes and popular novels such as *Friedemann Bach* (1858) and *The Little Chronicle of Magdalena Bach* (1925) fictionalised the lives of the Bach family and other musicians long gone.⁸ Here the line between innocent flight of fancy and deliberate deception can be hard to make out, and fiction can easily be accepted as fact by the unsuspecting. This was the danger some years ago with a group of forged

⁶ Mary Hunter, 'Editorial', *Eighteenth-Century Music* 15/2 (2018): 137–141. See the definition of 'truthiness' at <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/truthiness-meaning-word-origin> (accessed 28 August 2021). Since the letters are fabricated, I will not provide any 'original' German language in the notes. But the occasional German word will appear in the English 'translations' for the sake of truthiness.

⁷ These are reprinted with a commentary in Georg Philipp Telemann, *Briefwechsel: Sämtliche erreichbare Briefe von und an Telemann*, eds. Hans Grosse and Hans Rudolf Jung (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1972), 347–363.

⁸ Albert Emil Brachvogel, *Friedemann Bach: Ein Roman*, 3 vols. (Berlin: Janke, 1858), and Esther Meynell, *The Little Chronicle of Magdalena Bach* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1925). Brachvogel's novel was made into a 1941 film of the same title, directed by Traugott Müller. Meynell's book receives an extended discussion in David Yearsley, *Sex, Death & Minuets: Anna Magdalena Bach and Her Musical Notebooks* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 16–27. For a survey of fiction relating to Johann Sebastian Bach up to the middle of the twentieth century, see Hans-Martin Pleßke, 'Bach in der deutschen Dichtung', *Bach-Jahrbuch* 46 (1959): 5–51, and 50 (1963–64), 9–22. On the value of composer anecdotes for reception history, see Steven Zohn, 'Images of Telemann: Narratives of Reception in the Composer's Anecdote, 1750–1830', *Journal of Musicology* 21/4 (2004): 459–86.

letters attributed to Jean-Baptiste Lully's secretary that accompanied a recording of the opera *Atys*.⁹

Music-historical fiction nevertheless lives on, especially as focused on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹⁰ And we remain fascinated by similar types of fictions, as when we seek to recapture how music sounded in the past. Hunter alerts us to the close parallels between the historically-informed performance movement and historical fiction – which is not to say that we delude ourselves entirely in the process of recreating performing styles; rather, we weave 'verifiable facts' together with 'poetic licence' to create something that entertains as it teaches us about both past and present.¹¹ It is in this spirit that I 'perform' the following mix of fact and fiction.

Let us first consider the story's principal characters: in particular, the extent to which they were able to determine their own professional paths, and how their choices might have been affected (or not) by alternative circumstances. Given his emerging status as Germany's leading musician in 1721, Telemann had an unusual amount of agency in shaping the course of his career. Whereas Christoph Graupner, the Leipzig city council's second choice for the position of *Director musices* and *Thomaskantor*, ultimately turned down the offer because his aristocratic employer at the Darmstadt court refused to release him, Telemann was free to accept or decline the position as he pleased. This freedom was presumably one reason that he had left behind the courtly life for good almost a decade earlier.¹²

In my fictional account of Telemann's career in Leipzig, the composer sets an agenda very similar to the one he established in Hamburg: an ambitious programme of composing *Jahrgänge* (annual church cantata cycles), a series of public concerts with his *Collegium Musicum*, close involvement in the city's intellectual life (its literary circles in particular), and a thriving business of publishing

⁹ The five letters serve as liner notes to the recording of Lully's *Atys* by Les Arts Florissants under William Christie (Harmonia Mundi HMC 901257.59, 1987). Preceding them is the explanatory note: 'Jean Duron found five letters which were probably written by a zealous secretary of Lully's, or else by some enthusiastic performer. Though of very uneven quality, they seemed to him more appropriate than anything else one could write to illustrate the opera *Atys*'. For a critical commentary on the letters, see Neal Zaslaw, 'Three Notes on the Early History of the Orchestra', *Historical Performance: The Journal of Early Music America* 1/2 (1988): 63–67.

¹⁰ See, for example, James R. Gaines, *Evening in the Palace of Reason: Bach Meets Frederick the Great in the Age of Enlightenment* (New York: Fourth Estate, 2005); Barbara Quick, *Vivaldi's Virgins* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007); Lauren Belfer, *And After the Fire* (New York: Harper, 2016); Robert Barclay, *Jacob the Trumpeter* (Ottawa: Loose Cannon Press, 2018); and Thomas Thibault, *The Emperor's Flute* (Maggie Valley, NC: Ridgetop Press, 2019).

¹¹ Hunter, 'Editorial', 138.

¹² On Telemann's attitude to the life of a court musician, and the attitudes of his German contemporaries more generally, see Steven Zohn, '"Die vornehmste Hof-Tugend": German Musicians' Reflections on Eighteenth-Century Court Life', in *Music at German Courts, 1715–1760: Changing Artistic Priorities*, eds. Samantha Owens, Barbara M. Reul, and Janice B. Stockigt (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011), 413–425.

his own music. He assumes direction of a *Collegium Musicum* earlier than Bach did, and unlike Bach becomes music director at the city's *Neukirche* (New Church) (a position he held in his student days) in addition to the *Thomaskirche* and *Nikolaikirche* (St Nicolas Church). He also offers public concerts in the city's large private gardens – something Bach apparently never did – and commissions the local poet Christiane Mariane von Ziegler to provide librettos to an entire *Jahrgang* (Bach worked with Ziegler on just nine cantatas). When Telemann begins to publish his own works in Leipzig, he entrusts the local printer Christoph Bernhard Breitkopf with the Ziegler *Jahrgang* (Bach did not work with Breitkopf).

Like Hamburg, Leipzig was a flourishing trade centre that would have made it easy for Telemann to disseminate his printed wares. But Leipzig was not a port city, and thus offered fewer outlets to the wider world than Hamburg. Another significant difference between the two cities is that Leipzig's opera company had closed for good in 1720, whereas Hamburg's would continue operating until 1738. This disparity might well have given the historical Telemann pause when considering a move to Leipzig. Yet our fictional Telemann ameliorates the situation by continuing to write music for the Hamburg Opera, just as the historical one supplied works to the Leipzig Opera for more than a decade after he moved away from the city in 1705.

Bach, of course, never lived in a city or worked at a court that had an active opera company. My decision to keep him as a court musician, transferring from Cöthen to Gotha, allows him the opportunity to write operas for the first time while intensively cultivating church music – something he had not done since his Weimar days. He replaces the Capellmeister Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel, a prominent musician whose talent and experience make him ideally suited to succeed Telemann at Hamburg. Bach's varied activities at Gotha eventually allow him to take the place of Johann David Heinichen as Capellmeister at the Dresden court, and thereafter to replace Stölzel at Hamburg. Thus, Telemann's decision to accept the Leipzig offer leads to new professional possibilities for Bach and Stölzel, both of whom open the door when opportunity knocks.

The Capriccio: Telemann as *Thomaskantor* in Leipzig

Following Telemann's formal acceptance of the Leipzig town council's offer, and the subsequent refusal of Hamburg's senate to match its terms, the composer and his growing family arrived in their new city some time in November 1722. The earliest among the newly 'discovered' letters dates from several months later, 6 March 1723, and here Telemann describes the nature of his position:

I ask that you forgive my silence over the past several months, as settling into new surroundings has consumed most of my energies. Fortunately, the demands of the position are not as strenuous as they were at Hamburg, for here there are only two principal churches, only one cantata is required for the *Hauptgottesdienst* (main service), and only sixty such works are required yearly instead of the seventy-two at Hamburg. By prior arrangement, I have been released from my academic duties at the *Thomasschule* (St Thomas School) and need only instruct the scholars in music. On the other hand, I have taken on the weekly service at the *Paulinerkirche* (St Paul's Church), though both the city council and university were at first hesitant to give any ground in this regard. Some on the council would like me to oversee music at the *Neukirche* as well, so that the city's church music will be unified under a single director. But the honest Herr Schott acquits himself well there, and I am eager to avoid ruffling any feathers for now.

Telemann's lightened workload vis-à-vis cantata composition and performance was due in large measure to the observance in Leipzig of the penitential season (or *tempus clausum*) in Advent and Lent, during which no figural music was permitted in church. And whereas in Hamburg the tradition was for cantatas to be heard both prior to and following the sermon on Sundays, in Leipzig only a post-sermon cantata was required. Telemann's activities at the *Paulinerkirche*, the university church, marks a change from the arrangement during Johann Kuhnau's tenure (1701–1722), when the *Thomaskantor* directed only a limited number of services there. As we shall see, the wish of certain town council members to add the *Neukirche* to the new *Thomaskantor's* portfolio – the church for which Telemann served as organist and music director while a university student in 1704–1705 – would eventually be realised. The current director, Georg Balthasar Schott, became organist in August 1720 and would surely have hoped to succeed Kuhnau in the position now occupied by Telemann. Hence Telemann's hesitancy to act on the unnamed council members' wishes and add further insult to Schott's injury.

In the same letter, Telemann reports on his music for services in the *Thomaskirche* and *Nikolaikirche*:

I continue to set the *Jahrgang* provided to me by secretary von Lingen at Eisenach; next year I hope instead to work with a poet here in Leipzig. My singers and players for the principal churches are mostly satisfactory, and it is fortunate I requested that the first choir include sixteen boys, for this allows me to have a full set of ripienists on most Sundays. I have until now avoided setting up a Collegium Musicum, of which there are already two here. But I shall not long be satisfied to sing God's praises only in church.

The church cantata cycle to librettos by the Eisenach court secretary Hermann Ulrich von Lingen (1695–1743) was heard simultaneously in Leipzig and Eisenach in 1722–1723.¹³ Telemann's ability to perform his Leipzig cantatas with eight singers (four concertists and four ripienists; that is, principal and reinforcing singers) marks an improvement over his situation at Hamburg, where he usually had fewer than the four ripienists he preferred, even when he paid for extra singers from his own pocket.¹⁴ His report to Pisendel is borne out by surviving performance materials for the Leipzig cantatas, many of which include four ripienist parts. In 1723 Leipzig had two *Collegia Musica*: the one founded by Telemann two decades earlier was now directed by Schott, and the other, founded by Johann Friedrich Fasch, was led by the *Thomaskirche* organist Johann Gottlieb Görner. Telemann must have realised that setting up a new *Collegium* of his own, as he did soon after moving to Frankfurt and Hamburg, was for the moment an untenable proposition.

Telemann's next letter, dated 30 July 1724, is revealing about his non-official activities, including the publication of an entire annual cycle of church cantatas and the establishment of public concerts similar to those he had instituted in Frankfurt and Hamburg:

Frau von Ziegler, whose salons I happily frequent, has agreed to provide me with a *Jahrgang* that I shall begin setting this coming Advent. I intend to publish it by subscription under the title *Harmonischer Gottes-Dienst*, and the first instalment should be printed shortly before New Year's Day. Herr Breitkopf will set the cantatas in type, though the fact that he has never printed music before causes me not a little apprehension. Still, I doubt that Herr Krügener and the city's other engravers could better keep up with the strict publication schedule for the cantatas. Regarding this, I have recently taken my first delicate steps as an engraver, but I'm

¹³ A second 'Lingen-Jahrgang' followed in 1728–1729. On Telemann's two Lingen cycles, see Brit Reipsch, 'Die Telemannquellen in Goldbach: Der "erste Lingsche Jahrgang"', in *Telemann-Beiträge* 3, eds. Wolf Hohohm and Brit Reipsch (Oschersleben: Ziethen, 1997), 64–95; Brit Reipsch, 'Zum "Jahrgangsdenken" Georg Philipp Telemanns – dargelegt an Beispielen geistlicher Kantaten Eisenacher Dichter', in 'Nun bringt ein polnisch Lied die gantze Welt zum springen': *Telemann und Andere in der Musiklandschaft Sachsens und Polens*, ed. Friedhelm Brusniak (Sinzig: Studio, 1998), 63–76; Eric Fiedler, 'Telemann in Wien: Zur Wiederentdeckung von sieben als verschollen geltenden Kantaten aus Telemanns "Zweitem Lingen'schen Jahrgang" in der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek', *Die Musikforschung* 61/3 (2008), 205–221; and Hansjörg Drauschke, 'Telemanns zweiter Jahrgang auf Texte Hermann Ulrich von Lingen von 1728/29', in *Extravaganz und Geschäftssinn: Telemanns Hamburger Innovationen*, eds. Ivana Rentsch and Bernhard Jahn, *Hamburg Yearbook for Musicology* 1 (2019), 249–280.

¹⁴ On Telemann's performing forces in Hamburg, see Jürgen Neubacher, *Georg Philipp Telemanns Hamburger Kirchenmusik und ihre Aufführungsbedingungen (1721–1767)* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2009). Telemann's ensemble for church performances in Frankfurt is discussed in Jeanne Swack, 'Telemanns Chor: Aufführungspraxis und Stimmensätze in Telemanns Frankfurter Kantaten', in *Freiheit oder Gesetz? Aufführungspraktische Erkenntnisse aus Telemanns Handschriften, zeitgenössischen Abschriften, musiktheoretischen Publikationen und ihre Anwendung: Bericht über die Internationale Wissenschaftliche Konferenz, Magdeburg, 15. bis 17. März 2000, anlässlich der 15. Magdeburger Telemann-Festtage*, eds. Dieter Gutknecht, Wolf Hohohm, and Brit Reipsch (Hildesheim: Olms, 2007); and Jeanne Swack, 'Performing Forces in Telemann's Frankfurt Cantatas', *Die Tonkunst* 11/4 (2017), 456–462.

afraid that my clumsy hammering is not yet worthy of a public unveiling. I shall send you some samples of my forthcoming *Essercizii musici* by Michaelis, and you may decide for yourself how far I have come in this art. ... Herr Schott and I have at last reached an agreement about the Collegium, members of which will perform under me in the principal churches, under him in the *Neukirche*, and will be directed jointly by us in weekly concerts at Zimmermann's coffee garden or house. In addition, I plan to mount public performances of various occasional [vocal] works at the beautiful Apel and Groß-Bosischer gardens. I am also providing music for concerts in the Lust-Saal of the *Brandtvorweg* (the Brandt family estate). The audience there is quite different to what one finds in the city, and they have a special attachment to comic things, especially when featuring *Polnischer Geschmack* (Polish Style). I intend to oblige them with *lustige Dramaten* (comic cantatas) and a number of *burlesque Ouvertüren* (overture-suites).

Christiane Mariane von Ziegler, a rising poetic star, was possibly an old acquaintance of Telemann, for her father Franz Conrad Romanus was the Leipzig mayor who commissioned the composer to write music for the *Thomaskirche* and *Nikolaikirche* during his university years. The salon that she ran in her family palace, the so-called *Romanushaus*, welcomed many of the city's leading intellectual and artistic figures including Telemann.¹⁵ Although Leipzig enjoyed a thriving book trade, the music publishing scene in 1724 was still anaemic, as the city's professional engravers focused on illustrations and generally lacked experience in executing musical notation.¹⁶ Johann Gottfried Krüger was an exception in this respect, but engraving an entire cycle of church cantatas was evidently too heavy a commitment for him. Christoph Bernhard Breitkopf, then barely five years into his business, may well have been the only local publisher willing to undertake the *Harmonischer Gottes-Dienst*. Having to settle for movable type (far less satisfactory in appearance than engraved copper plates) must have provided the impetus for Telemann's own experiments with engraving; that he eventually spent two years preparing plates for the twenty-four sonatas of the *Essercizii musici* suggests a steep learning curve on his part.¹⁷

¹⁵ For an overview of Ziegler's life and career, see Mark A. Peters, *A Woman's Voice in Baroque Music: Mariane von Ziegler and J. S. Bach* (New York: Routledge, 2008), chapter 1. Ziegler's connections with Telemann are discussed in Steven Zohn, 'Morality and the "Fair-Sexing" of Telemann's Faithful Music Master', in *Consuming Music: Individuals, Institutions, Communities, 1730–1830*, eds. Emily Green and Catherine Mayes (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2017), 82–85.

¹⁶ See Gregory G. Butler, *J. S. Bach's Clavierübung III: The Making of a Print* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 21–34.

¹⁷ On the redating of the *Essercizii musici* from 1740 to ca. 1727–1728, see Steven Zohn, *Music for a Mixed Taste: Style, Genre, and Meaning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 378–380. Kota Sato, 'Zur Datierung der "Essercizii Musici"', in *Mitteilungsblatt der Internationalen Telemann-Gesellschaft e.V.* 27 (2013), 24–30, has argued for pushing back the collection's publication date to 1726.

Telemann's shared direction of the *Collegium Musicum* provided him supplementary church musicians and an outlet for his public performances. Characteristically, he also initiated a series of performances in two of the city's most opulent landscaped gardens, no doubt in the open air during warm weather and in one of several structures when the temperature dropped.¹⁸ Such performances were facilitated by Telemann's connections with the Apel and Bose families (see below). His activities at the *Brandtvorwerk* in the Leipzig suburbs were evidently of a different nature.¹⁹ The comic cantatas he mentions performing there probably included such works as *Du angenehmer Weiberorden*, TWV 20:49, and *Der Geschmack im Lieben*, TWV 1:deest, a lost 'Drama' known only from its listing in the Breitkopf catalogues.²⁰ A number of Telemann's 'burlesque' overture-suites (for example, TWV 55:F10, G2, G10, G12, and B8) would have served the purpose as well.

In the same letter, Telemann also conveys to Pisendel news from Hamburg, where Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel had replaced Telemann as city *Director musices* and cantor at the *Johanneum* school in April 1723, and from the court of Saxe-Altenburg-Gotha, where the following June Johann Sebastian Bach had succeeded Stölzel as Capellmeister:

Herr Stölzel reports that he has had no more luck than I in dealing with the Hamburg senate, which has also censured him for holding public performances. Otherwise, his opera *Der Musenberg* has enjoyed success at the *Gänsemarkt* (opera house at the Goose Market), and he has agreed to take over the company's direction. My *Sieg der Schönheit* will be revived there next season, and I have also been asked to contribute some intermezzi and an opera on the Orpheus myth. Our Capellmeister Bach is becoming acclimatised to Gotha, where he finds the Capelle better outfitted than in Cöthen. He seems happy to again be providing a

¹⁸ These structures included villas, concert halls, theatres, orangeries, and coffee houses. Concerning Leipzig's gardens during the early eighteenth century, see Hugo Koch, *Sächsische Gartenkunst* (Berlin: Deutsche Bauzeitung, 1910), 70–88, Bürger, *Gärten, Promenaden: Leipziger Gartenkultur im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*, 2 ed., eds. Nadja Horsch and Simone Tübbecke (Leipzig: Passage, 2019), chapter 1.

¹⁹ Musical activities in the *Lustsaal* are discussed by Bettina Varwig, 'Metaphors of Time and Modernity in Bach', *Journal of Musicology* 29/2 (2012), 169–72, and Szymon Paczkowski, *Polish Style in the Music of Johann Sebastian Bach*, trans. Piotr Szymczak (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 269–271.

²⁰ The drama's title is given in Breitkopf's 1765 thematic catalogue. See Johann Gottlob Immanuel Breitkopf, *The Breitkopf Thematic Catalogue: The Six Parts and Sixteen Supplements 1762–1787*, ed. Barry S. Brook (New York: Dover, 1966), col. 200. A fuller description is provided in the 1761 non-thematic catalogue: *Verzeichniß Musicalischer Werke, allein zur Praxis, sowohl zum Singen, als für alle Instrumente, welche nicht durch den Druck bekannt gemacht worden. ... Erste Ausgabe* (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1761), 34: 'Drama Zwischen Piccolina, Liebhaberinn der kleinen Mannspersonen; Grandilla, Liebhaberinn der großen Mannspersonen; Blondino, Liebhaber der blonden Frauenzimmer; und Bruno, [Liebhaber] des braunen Frauenzimmers, à 2 Corni, 2 Bassoni, 2 Flauti, 2 Oboi, 2 Violini, Viola, Tenore e Basso, con Cembalo' (Drama between Piccolina, lover of small men; Gandilla, lover of large men; Blondino, lover of blond women; and Bruno, [lover] of brunette women, for two horns, two bassoons, two flutes, two oboes, two violins, viola, tenor and bass, with keyboard).

well-appointed church music, as he is fond of saying, including passions and *Jahrgänge*. He is even writing pastoral operas, which must be something rare to hear. I have invited him to give a recital on his beloved Scheibe organ in the *Paulinerkirche* this autumn.

Despite experiencing some of the same challenges as Telemann before him, Stölzel was ideally suited to the Hamburg position, having already won acclaim as a composer of sacred and secular cantatas, oratorios, and operas, many to his own librettos. Evidently Telemann's abrupt resignation from the directorship of the Hamburg Opera did not prevent a revival of *Sieg der Schönheit*, TVWV 21:10, the first opera he wrote following his move to that city. The *Intermezzi* he refers to must have included *Pimpinone oder Die ungleiche Heyrath*, TVWV 21:15 (1725; published in 1728), and the lost *La Capricciosa e il Credulo; Die geliebte Eigensinnige und der Leicht-gläubige Liebhaber*, TVWV 21:16 (1725), while the Orpheus opera became *Die wunderbare Beständigkeit der Liebe, oder Orpheus*, TVWV 21:18 (1726).

Bach saw his artistic and financial fortunes improve at Gotha, where he could concentrate on church cantatas for the first time since leaving Weimar. That none of his operas from this period have survived is particularly regrettable. Bach had already examined Johann Scheibe's new fifty-three-stop organ during a visit to Leipzig in December 1717, finding some deficiencies but also much to admire.²¹ If he accepted Telemann's offer to make the journey from Gotha to Leipzig in the fall of 1724, then he may well have been present at the baptism of his godson, Benedictus Sebastian Wilhelm Telemann, on 12 September.²²

Bach also figures in Pisendel's letter of 12 January 1729, written during a time of transition for the Dresden electoral *Hofkapelle* (court orchestra):

I write to you with the sad news that our celebrated *Konzertmeister* Volumier has recently passed away, and that I am to have the unenviable task of attempting to live up to his example. Misfortune may soon strike us again, I fear, as Capellmeister Heinichen has fallen gravely ill and cannot expect to live much longer. We are fortunate that he was able to see his *General-Bass in der Composition* into print, though I suspect that doing so has taken a toll on his well-being. Should the court soon need a Capellmeister, I would rather it not be another import from Italy – now a growing trend here – but instead one of our worthy countrymen. Zelenka is

²¹ For a description and illustration of the organ, together with Bach's report, see Christoph Wolff and Markus Zepf, *The Organs of J. S. Bach: A Handbook*, trans. Lynn Edwards Butler (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 47–50 and 145–170. See also *The New Bach Reader: A Life of Johann Sebastian Bach in Letters and Documents*, eds. Hans T. David, Arthur Mendel, and Christoph Wolff (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 83–86 (Nos. 71–73); hereafter: NBR.

²² For a list of Telemann's children, see Wolf Hobohm, ed., *'... Aus diesem Ursprunge ...': Dokumente, Materialien, Kommentare zur Familiengeschichte Georg Philipp Telemanns* (Magdeburg: Zentrum für Telemann-Pflege und -Forschung, 1988), 7–13.

angling for a promotion to Capellmeister, which many would say he has earned. But his majesty seems disinclined to show him such favour, and instead recalls with fondness Capellmeister Bach's two organ recitals at the *Sophienkirche* (St Sophie's Church) several years ago, not to mention an earlier concert at Count Flemming's house following the fleeing of Marchand. I have written to Gotha to see if such a change in scenery might appeal to our Bach, and perhaps you might place this idea in his ear as well should he visit his son at the university.

Pisendel was caught in the middle of a delicate situation. Jan Dismas Zelenka had long performed the duties of a Capellmeister at the court's Catholic church in Dresden, though he was never to receive a commensurate title or salary.²³ On the other hand, in view of Bach's well received recitals at Dresden's *Sophienkirche* in 1725, and his now widespread recognition as a composer of church and theatrical music, he was a natural choice to succeed Johann David Heinichen (who would die of tuberculosis the following 16 July, shortly after completing his voluminous continuo treatise).²⁴ Like Heinichen, Bach would have been responsible for composing Latin-texted church music, occasional vocal works, and various types of instrumental music. The advocacy of his friend Pisendel, whom he had known at least since his early Weimar days, could only have bolstered his case.²⁵ The Bach son mentioned by Pisendel is Wilhelm Friedemann, who had matriculated at Leipzig University in October 1728.

Telemann's reply to this letter is lost, but he wrote again on 23 October 1729, by which time J. S. Bach had evidently been appointed Dresden Capellmeister:

There have been many comings and goings here, with my household of thirteen persons supplemented by various visitors, including the young Bach and your Monsieur Buffardin, to whom I have promised a set of unaccompanied flute fantasias. Less happily, my wife seems determined to spend us into the poorhouse, as talers trickle out of my hands like water. I'm afraid the flow of florins from my publications cannot hope to keep pace. And as I have discovered still more unhappily, my income from the cantorate continues to be considerably lower than I

²³ The difficult economic and political conditions under which Zelenka worked during the 1730s are described in Janice B. Stockigt, *Jan Dismas Zelenka (1679–1745)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), chapters 6–7.

²⁴ For the newspaper report of Bach's *Sophienkirche* recitals, see NBR, 117 (No. 118). The aborted Bach-Marchand contest and ensuing performance are documented in NBR, 79–80 (No. 67), 301–02 (No. 306), 408 (No. 396) and 427–28.

²⁵ On Bach's early contact with Pisendel, see Hans-Joachim Schulze, 'Telemann–Pisendel–Bach: Zu einem unbekannten Bach-Autograph', in *Die Bedeutung Georg Philipp Telemanns für die Entwicklung der europäischen Musikkultur im 18. Jahrhunderts: Bericht über die Internationale Wissenschaftliche Konferenz anlässlich der Georg-Philipp-Telemann-Ehrung der DDR, Magdeburg 12. bis 18. März 1981*, eds. Günter Fleischhauer, Wolf Hobohm, and Walther Siegmund-Schultze, 3 vols. (Magdeburg: Zentrum für Telemann-Pflege und -Forschung, 1983), 2:73–77.

was led to expect, and the number of weddings and funerals requiring music is hardly greater than it was at Hamburg. Nevertheless, I have decided to bring my *Music-Meister* to a conclusion after one year, since all the subscribers in the world could not persuade me to keep chasing contributors – among whom I was more than fortunate to count you and your Dresden colleagues Bach, Petzold, Weiss, and Zelenka. I now turn to writing a set of quartets, as my *Liederbuch* is at long last ready for printing. These works will be dedicated to Herr Bose, who continues his support of me both morally and with his purse. Next month I shall begin work on a new *Jahrgang*, my seventh here, to texts by Professor Gottsched, with whom I wrestled mightily over the kind and sequence of movements to be included. At any rate, it shall be published as a *Fortsetzung* (continuation) to my *Harmonischer Gottes-Dienst*, as you will see from the enclosed call for *Pränumeranten* (subscribers). The new year will also see my translation of Fux's *Gradus*, for which I have received encouragement and assistance from Professor Winckler. And to add more fuel to the fire: with Herr Schott's recent departure from Leipzig, I have once again become director of music in the *Neukirche*.

Telemann's residence in the *Thomasschule* must have been a home-away-from-home for Wilhelm Friedemann Bach while he studied at the university, and the Dresden flautist Pierre Gabriel Buffardin was probably one of many visiting musicians who called upon the composer at regular intervals. In this light, it is not hard to imagine Buffardin having been the inspiration behind other flute works by Telemann in addition to the *12 Fantaisies travers. sans basse* (1731).²⁶ Four other publications mentioned in the letter – *Der getreue Music-Meister* (1728–1729), the *Quadri* (1730), the *Fast allgemeines Evangelisch-Musicalisches Lieder-Buch* (1730), and the cantata cycle *Fortsetzung des Harmonischen Gottes-Dienstes* (1731/32) – made it into print as well.²⁷ But for some reason Telemann abandoned his projected translation of Fux's *Gradus ad Parnassum* (Vienna, 1725).²⁸ In dedicating the *Quadri* to the gold and silver merchant Georg Heinrich Bose (1682–1731), Telemann was acknowledging support from one of Leipzig's most prominent citizens, who also happened to be a close family friend and neighbour in the *Thomaskirchhof* (St Thomas Churchyard). The scoring of the quartets for flute,

²⁶ Kota Sato has pushed back the publication date of this collection from 1732 to 1731. See his 'Telemanns Notenstich und die Chronologie seiner Werke', in *Vom Umgang mit Telemanns Werk einst und jetzt: Telemannrezeption in drei Jahrhunderten: Bericht über die Internationale Wissenschaftliche Konferenz, Magdeburg, 15. und 16. März 2012, anlässlich der 21. Magdeburger Telemann-Festtage*, eds. Carsten Lange and Brit Reipsch (Hildesheim: Olms, 2017), 58–66.

²⁷ An overview of Telemann's publishing activities is provided in Zohn, *Music for a Mixed Taste*, chapter 7. Concerning Telemann's solicitation of contributors to *Der getreue Music-Meister*, see Zohn, 'Morality and the "Fair-Sexing" of Telemann's Faithful Music Master', 71.

²⁸ He did, however, go so far as to advertise the translation as forthcoming in 1728. See Martin Ruhnke, ed., *Georg Philipp Telemann: Thematisch-Systematisches Verzeichnis seiner Werke (TWV): Instrumentalwerke*, vol. I (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1984), 232.

violin, cello or viola da gamba, and continuo may have been inspired in part by domestic music-making in the Bose household, where family members played instruments such as recorder, violin, lute, and keyboard.²⁹

The letter also vividly confirms a long-suspected connection between Telemann's financial struggles and his publishing programme during the late 1720s and 1730s, as well as his close association with Leipzig university through professors such as Johann Christoph Gottsched and Johann Heinrich Winckler.³⁰ Telemann's insistence on a particular movement sequence for his 'Gottsched-Jahrgang' echoes his similar – and evidently more congenial – collaborations with Erdmann Neumeister on several cantata cycles both before and after the 1720s: the *Geistliches Singen und Spielen* (1710/11), *Französischer Jahrgang* (1714/15), *Concerten Jahrgang* (1716/17), and *Musicalisches Lob Gottes* (1742/43).³¹ His disappointment over the meagre ancillary income from weddings and funerals must have been considerable, for while in Hamburg he had been prevented by an ordinance from taking on wedding commissions, which had been a determining factor in his decision to apply for the Leipzig position.³² On the other hand, taking on the direction of music in the *Neukirche* following Schott's departure to become cantor at the Gotha court would have come with some additional income. And Telemann now took over sole direction of the ensemble that henceforth became known once again as the 'Telemannsche' *Collegium Musicum*.

Two letters from the 1730s shed light on professional challenges in Leipzig, Dresden, and Hamburg. In a brief note of 1 April 1735, Pisendel reported that:

Our incomparable Capellmeister Bach and *Kirchen-Compositeur* (church composer) Zelenka appear finally to have resolved their differences with regard to duties in the court church. But now Bach and *Oberkapellmeister* (highest-ranking Capellmeister) Haß are not speaking to each other, and each complains to me about the other. This dispute has its origins several years ago, when Haß took offense at Bach's reference to 'lovely ditties' in *Cleofide*. As you well know, I share Bach's frustrations regarding our Italian colleagues, especially *Cammer-Organist* (chamber organist)

²⁹ Evidence of the Bose family's music-making is provided in *Bachs Nachbarn: Die Familie Bose, Kabinettausstellung im Bach-Museum Leipzig vom 1. September 2005 bis 11. Januar 2006*, eds. Kerstin Wiese and Anja Fritz (Leipzig: Bach-Archiv Leipzig, 2005), 16.

³⁰ On the potential financial motivations behind Telemann's self-publishing business, see Ulrich Siegele, 'Im Blick von Bach auf Telemann: Arten, ein Leben zu betrachten', in *Biographie und Kunst als historiographisches Problem: Bericht über die Internationale Wissenschaftliche Konferenz anlässlich der 16. Magdeburger Telemann-Festtage Magdeburg, 13. bis 15. März 2002*, eds. Joachim Kremer, Wolf Hobohm, and Wolfgang Ruf (Hildesheim: Olms, 2004), 60–61; and Zohn, *Music for a Mixed Taste*, 381.

³¹ The collaboration between Neumeister and Telemann is examined in Ute Poetzsch-Seban, *Die Kirchenmusik von Georg Philipp Telemann und Erdmann Neumeister: Zur Geschichte der protestantischen Kirchenkantate in der ersten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Beeskow: Ortus, 2006).

³² See the documents and commentary in Kremer, ed., *Georg Philipp Telemanns Memorial*.

Ristori, who has been envious of the Capellmeister's organ playing and music right from the start.

The friction Pisendel describes here was perhaps inevitable, given that Zelenka must initially have seen Bach as encroaching on his domain, and the fact that the younger Johann Adolph Hasse had been given authority over the more experienced, if impolitic, Bach. Pisendel's reference to Hasse as 'Haß' (hate) is familiar from his later correspondence with Telemann, as is his frustration with Italian musicians at the Dresden court. Bach's condescending remark regarding Hasse's *Cleofide* (which premiered on 13 September 1731) confirms a well-known anecdote reported by Johann Nikolaus Forkel.³³

Finally, Telemann wrote to Pisendel on 30 June 1738 to share news about Paris, Leipzig, and Hamburg:

Last week I returned from Paris, where I enjoyed attentive audiences, including at the royal household. I found the quality of playing there uneven, but was astonished at the style of enharmonic singing I heard at the Concert Spirituel, where my grand motet was performed by nearly one hundred persons to excellent effect. ... Monsieur Guignon, who played my quartets, sends his fondest greetings and admiration to you. ... Before leaving Leipzig, I was able to resolve peacefully my dispute with Rector Ernesti over his appointment of an unmusical first prefect without my consent. As you can imagine, this did not sit well, though from now on I think we shall work well together. However, rather than burden a prefect with too much responsibility in my absence, I appointed my private student Homilius to take charge of weekly services. He performed his duties exceedingly well, according to all reports, and even composed a few cantatas of his own.

It is unfortunate news about Herr Stölzel's difficulties in carrying out his duties in Hamburg. His head becomes less and less clear, and Herr Scheibe reports that the cantor spends most days pottering about in his garden. Little flows from his pen now, so there is naturally talk of finding a successor. Herr Hurlebusch has his supporters in the senate, despite his infamous organ audition several years ago, but our *Critischer Musicus* is determined to prevent a disaster of still greater proportions. On this count, Herr Brockes and Herr Neumeister ask me for recommendations of more suitable candidates, and given the deteriorating situation there in Dresden, I have considered that our Capellmeister Bach might wish to plough a new field, one that he already seeded some years ago at the *Jacobikirche* (St Jacob's Church). As you know, he is something of a lazy hero when it comes to answering letters, so I ask that you have a few words with him on my behalf. Nothing is guaranteed, but he is well remembered in Hamburg.

³³ Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Ueber Johann Sebastian Bachs Leben, Kunst und Kunstwerke* (Leipzig: Hoffmeister und Kühnel, 1802), 48. See the translation in NBR, 461.

From this report, we learn that Telemann's visit to Paris lasted several weeks longer than previously suspected, lending credence to a theory that the 'Capell Meister' who associated in the city with Count Friedrich von Mecklenburg in May and June 1738 was in fact Telemann.³⁴ The enharmonic singing that Telemann heard in Paris inspired his use of similar harmonic effects in *Deus judicium tuum regida*, TVWV 7:7, the grand motet he refers to in the letter.³⁵ Telemann's dispute with rector Johann Heinrich Ernesti generated multiple complaints to the Leipzig town council from both sides. But it now appears that the two were able to bring the matter to a peaceful resolution. Telemann's capable pupil Gottfried August Homilius had been studying law at Leipzig University since May 1735, but unfortunately none of the cantatas he composed while deputizing for his teacher has so far been identified.

Stölzel's failing health during the late 1730s mobilised a network of leaders in Hamburg's intellectual life to find a suitable successor: the composer and writer Johann Adolph Scheibe; Erdmann Neumeister, then head pastor of the *Jacobikirche*; the poet and Hamburg senator Barthold Heinrich Brockes; and the composer, writer and former music director of the cathedral, Johann Mattheson (the 'Critischer Musicus' mentioned by Telemann). The peripatetic organist Conrad Friedrich Hurlebusch in effect eliminated himself from consideration with his poor behaviour as an applicant for the position of *Petrikirche* (St Peter's Church) organist in 1735.³⁶ Bach, who by 1738 was tiring of court life and had already been offered and declined the organist job at the *Jacobikirche* in 1720, was clearly the superior choice. Thus, it was with Telemann's support that he auditioned for and won the position of Hamburg city music director and cantor of the *Johanneum* in 1739.

From here, we enter familiar territory. Bach proceeded to collaborate with Neumeister on several new *Jahrgänge* while being inspired by Hamburg's mercantile spirit to publish a number of his works, including two sets of *Sechs*

³⁴ See Ralph-Jürgen Reipsch, "'Paris ist der angenehmste Ort auf der Weltdt': Musikalische Erträge der Kavalierstour des Erbprinzen Friedrich von Mecklenburg (1737–1739)", in *Utopie und Idylle: Der Mecklenburg-Schweriner Hof in Ludwigslust (1764–1837)*, eds. Avischag Müller and Andreas Waczkat (Hildesheim: Olms, 2019), 179–181.

³⁵ See Wolfgang Hirschmann, "'Toute innovation dans les Arts est dangereuse": Telemanns 71. Psalm, sein "Neues musikalisches System" und die ramistische Ästhetik", in *'L'esprit français' und die Musik Europas: Entstehung, Einfluss und Grenzen einer ästhetischen Doktrin / 'L'esprit français' et la musique en Europe: Émergence, influence et limites d'une doctrine esthétique: Festschrift für Herbert Schneider*, eds. Michelle Biget-Mainfroy and Rainer Schmusch (Hildesheim: Olms, 2007), 373–385; and Wolfgang Hirschmann, "'Aber es klinget doch süß": Mikrointervallik als theoretisches, ästhetisches und kompositorisches Problem in Telemanns Neuem Musikalischem System", in *Stimmungen und Vielstimmigkeit der Aufklärung*, eds. Silvan Moosmüller, Boris Previšić, and Laure Spaltenstein (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2017), 82–95.

³⁶ This episode is the subject of Steven Zohn, 'Naïve Questions and Laughable Answers: An Eighteenth-Century Job Interview', in *Coll'astuzia, col giudizio: Essays in Honor of Neal Zaslaw*, ed. Cliff Eisen (Ann Arbor: Steglein, 2009), 62–92.

Clavier-Concerte (Nuremberg, 1741 and 1743) and the 1745 *St John Passion* (Nuremberg, 1747). Telemann would go on to write a series of passion oratorios, odes, and cantatas during the 1750s and early 1760s to librettos by young Leipzig poets such as Christian Fürchtegott Gellert and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. These were performed by the city's *Grosses Concert*, and several were repeated in Berlin, where Telemann visited the court of the Prussian king Frederick the Great on a few occasions while his godson Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach was harpsichordist. During this period, he also laid the groundwork for the younger Bach to succeed him as *Thomaskantor* in 1768.³⁷

As difficult as it may be for us to imagine how things could have turned out otherwise, the 'new' letters discussed above encourage us to contemplate the possibility of alternative scenarios. For example, what might have happened if Telemann had turned down the Leipzig offer, and the position had been filled by the elder Bach?³⁸

³⁷ It now appears that the historical Telemann actively sought to position C. P. E. Bach as his successor in Hamburg. See Peter Wollny, 'C. P. E. Bach, Georg Philipp Telemann und die Osterkantate "Gott hat den Herrn auferwecket" Wq 244', in *Er ist der Vater, wir sind die Bub'n: Essays in Honor of Christoph Wolff*, eds. Paul Cornelson and Peter Wollny (Ann Arbor: Steglein, 2010), 78–94.

³⁸ For a detailed account of the St Thomas Cantorate and School, see Michael Maul, *Bach's Famous Choir: The Saint Thomas School in Leipzig, 1212–1804*, trans. Richard Howe (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2018), chapter 4.