

Relationships between Text and Music in the 'hybrid' Recitatives of Bach's second Leipzig Cantata Cycle

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'The relation of Bach's music to its text is the most intimate that can be imagined', stated Albert Schweitzer in 1905.¹ Despite this perspective, Bach's recitative movements have remained the preserve of the specialist.² Of the three principal twentieth-century volumes dealing with the cantatas as a body of work, Whittaker (1959) and Robertson (1972) are essentially outdated and obsolete though of continuing historical interest.³ In these works the recitatives are generally given less attention than other movements; for example in the chapter

¹ Albert Schweitzer, *Johann Sebastian Bach* (1905), trans. Ernest Newman, 2 vols (London: Black, 1923; repr. Paganiniana publications, Inc., 1980), vol. II, p. 25.

² Recent research on the development of recitative style includes (editor's addition): Mark A. Radice, *Scripture Recitative from Schütz to Bach* (Diss. University of Rochester, Eastman School of Music, 1984); Mark A. Radice, 'Heinrich Schütz and the Foundations of the Stile Recitativo in Germany', *Bach. Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute* 16/4 (1985), 9-23; Mark A. Radice, 'Johann Mattheson and the Stylus Narrativus', *Bach. Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute* 18/3 (1987), 3-9; Hermann Melchert, *Das Rezitativ der Bachschen Johannespassion* (Wilhelmshaven: Noetzel, 1988); Hermann Melchert, *Die melodischen Grundmuster des Rezitativs der Bachschen Matthäuspassion* (Wilhelmshaven: Noetzel, c.1991); George J. Buelow, 'Expressivity in the Accompanied Recitatives of Bach's Cantatas', *Bach Studies*, ed. Don O. Franklin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 18-35; *Die Quellen Johann Sebastian Bachs - Bachs Musik im Gottesdienst, Bericht über das Symposium 4.-8. Oktober 1995 in der International Bachakademie Stuttgart*, ed. Renate Steiger (Heidelberg: Manutius, 1998); Reinhard Strohm, 'Rezitativ', *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2nd edn, ed. Ludwig Finscher (Kassel etc.: Bärenreiter, 1998), vol. 8, col. 224-242; Reinmar Emans, 'Gedanken zu Bachs Accompagnato-Rezitativ', „Die Zeit, die Tag und Jahre macht“: *Zur Chronologie des Schaffens von Johann Sebastian Bach. Bericht über das Internationale Wissenschaftliche Colloquium aus Anlass des 80. Geburtstages von Alfred Dürr, Göttingen, 13.-15. März 1998* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), pp. 103-120; Reinmar Emans, 'Überlegungen zum Bachschen Secco-Rezitativ', *Bach und die Stile*, ed. Martin Geck (Dortmund: Klangfarben, 1999), pp. 37-49; Peter Benary, 'Die motivgeprägten Accompagnati in Johann Sebastian Bach's Matthäus-Passion', *Musiktheorie* 15/2 (Laaber, 2000), 99-106; Markus Waldura, 'Zu Johann Matthesons Lehre von den Ab- und Einschnitten der Klang-Rede', *Musiktheorie* 15/3 (Laaber, 2001), 195-219.

³ W. Gillies Whittaker, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959); Alec Robertson, *The Church Cantatas of J. S. Bach* (New York: Praeger, 1972).

that Whittaker devotes entirely to recitatives, little is said of the two in BWV 2 (discussed below) beyond the mention of false relationships and a tortuous bass line matching the 'unsavoury text' (vol. 2, pp. 17-19).

Alfred Dürr, *The Cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach*,⁴ provides comment on every movement, albeit it is sometimes brief and lacks incisive musical analysis; although it eclipses the more modest tomes of Stephen Daw (1981) and W. Murray Young (1989).⁵ Synoptic translations of the texts highlighting the chorale verses and aligned to the relevant biblical references may be found in Unger (1996) and Stokes (2004), both useful adjuncts to a fuller understanding although lacking the musical analysis.⁶ Chafe (2000) engages in some perceptive musical analysis of a few movements (notably from BWV 21, 121, 9 and 77).⁷ A wide range of books has appeared over the last decade dealing with various aspects of Bach's life and creative endeavours, but bringing little focus upon this particular body of work.

Despite the richness of information, comment and insight that has been provided about and into the cantatas over the last one hundred years, it is clear that the recitatives have been overshadowed by the more immediately appealing arias and choruses. The time has come for a re-examination and reassessment of these movements with a focus upon their *musical* construction, conveyance of *meaning* and their unique dramatic qualities. Additionally, the recitatives frequently play a crucial part in the overall structuring of cantatas as well as providing examples of powerful dramatic narrative enriched with metaphoric and imagic undertones.

Bach's 'hybrid' recitatives, especially those from the second 'chorale/fantasia' Leipzig cycle, offer a rich source of material for the study of his approach to the setting of text. What I mean by 'hybrid' recitatives here are forms including elements of one or more of the following:

1. arioso;
2. chorale (complete or in sections);
3. reiterated ritornello sections.

The reader's attention is also drawn to Bach's further experimentation with the recitative format through its rare incursions into a chorus or aria (e.g. 103/1, 101/4 and 128/3).

Superficially, these forms may be viewed as little more than a convenient means of setting particularly long verses. They have, on occasion, been roundly criticised as 'inferior' components of the cantatas, not least by Schweitzer; in particular the 'excessively tasteless recitative-passages that are dovetailed into the

⁴ Alfred Dürr, *The Cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach*, trans. R.D.P. Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁵ Stephen Daw, *The Music of Johann Sebastian Bach, the Choral Works* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1981); W. Murray Young, *The Cantatas of J S Bach* (McFarland 1989)

⁶ Melvin P. Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts: An Interlinear Translation with Reference Guide to Biblical Quotations and Allusions* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1996); Richard Stokes, *J. S. Bach: The Complete Cantatas* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2004).

⁷ Eric Chafe, *Analyzing Bach Cantatas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

chorale text'.⁸ This paper reevaluates these movements, adding examples of analytical approaches.

Bach's combination of recitative with elegant and flowing arioso emerged early, perhaps an inevitable consequence of his natural gift for expressive melody.⁹ The first example in the Leipzig cycles occurs in the second cantata (BWV 76/6) of *Jahrgang* I. The arioso frequently comes about when the text concentrates upon notions of prayer and faith, or relationships with and statements pertaining to God and/or Jesus. The changes in the nature of the melodic line are frequently marked by a transformation of character of the continuo writing. The sparse 'secco' bass is often replaced by more concentrated and characterful *melodic* writing, frequently derived and extended from motives which have imagic relationships with the text and/or motivic echoes of the chorale.

Jahrgang II and the development of the hybrid recitative

It is, however, particularly within the second Leipzig cycle where Bach expanded his experiments with recitative structures. Contextually one notes that of the fifty-three cantatas of this cycle, only one contains no recitatives: BWV 4, composed at least a decade earlier. Of the rest, six (107, 6, 85, 108, 128 and 68) contain just one recitative, and five (20, 5, 92, 180, and 175) have three. The remaining forty-one have two recitatives, clearly the norm. There are four written for two voices (130, 62, 126 and 175) and four have interpolations by the chorus (178, 41, 3 and 92).

The chorale melody may be used vocally or instrumentally, unaltered or heavily ornamented, complete or with selected phrases. It may be presented by the singer, an 'obligato' instrument or by the continuo. When embellished, the phrases are often underlined and proclaimed by a recurring theme in the continuo (see, for example, Mus.Ex. 3 below) and there are rare examples of the entire bass line consisting of a minimally adapted version of the chorale melody (as in BWV 38/4).

The most intense area of experimentation may be found in the group of cantatas from BWV 93 onward. However, hybrid movements make their first appearance in BWV 2,¹⁰ the second of those four highly significant cantatas where Bach previewed the eclectic range of structures he would go on to present as examples of 'well regulated' church music. The recitatives from BWV 2 clearly demonstrate the means by which Bach was actively seeking to cultivate innovative relationships between words and music. In a recitative of the first cantata of the cycle, 'O Ewigkeit, du Donnerwort' (BWV 20/9) there had been only the merest hint of fusion where the second line of text (listing the

⁸ Schweitzer, *Johann Sebastian Bach* (n. 1 above), vol. II, p. 375, referring to BWV 101.

⁹ Dürr, *The Cantatas* (n. 4 above), p. 67, sets out the opening movement of the early work BWV 18, 'Gleichwie der Regen und Schnee', a Weimar Cantata (?1713), which is a recitative *secco* with arioso section.

¹⁰ 'Ach Gott, vom Himmel sieh darein', BWV 2, based on Martin Luther's adaptation of Psalm 12, written for 18 June 1724. See Eric Chafe, *Analyzing Bach's Cantatas* (n. 7 above), pp. 128-132, for a detailed analysis of the complex modality of this work.

pleasurable sins of this world: 'Pracht, Hoffahrt, Reichtum, Ehr' und Geld') is punctuated by a sweepingly aggressive continuo melody. But in the second cantata, 'Ach Gott, vom Himmel sieh darein', Bach begins to explore fully the structural and expressive possibilities of combined elements.

The theme of BWV 2 is the barrenness of mortal life which results from the heresies that separate us from the word, trust and love of God. The opening chorale fantasia, whilst appearing to evoke the familiar stolidity of the traditional German motet, nevertheless has a harsh and arid quality. The harmony, chromatic and uncompromising from as early as b. 3, suggests the barren scene of a lifeless planet. False doctrine has reduced mankind to a bleak and anguished existence in which the only hope is for God to look down and to take pity upon it. The gloomy scene is thus set for the powerfully evocative expressions of alienation, decay and corruption which appear in the tenor recitative.

'Sie lehren eitel falsche List', BWV 2/2

This recitative (Mus. Ex. 1) begins with a literal quotation of one of the lines from the original Lutheran hymn, 'Sie lehren eitel falsche List' (They [the heretics] preach nothing but false cunning).¹¹ Additional paraphrased lines develop the theme - 'it infects the Church and stands in opposition to the Bible. Some choose one path some another, their unwise reason distracting them'. The final lines compare the state of those who have been misled to the condition of the grave; externally attractive but rotting, stinking and decaying from within. The language is deliberately stark and dramatic, clearly designed to arrest the attention of the congregation.

The movement introduces only two phrases of the chorale melody into the recitative setting (bars 1-2 and 7-8) in a manner that achieves a degree of musical unity but, more significantly, conjoins textual ideas (Mus. Ex. 1).

¹¹ See Dürr, *The Cantatas* (n. 4 above), pp. 402-03.

conjoined through the sense of musical unity. That is the nature of communal liturgical music.

Bach, however, takes this logic one stage further. The assertion in that first chorale phrase as stated in the recitative has echoes with the other lines of text which it carries in the first and last movements. Thus virtually subliminal references to God's encompassing presence looking down upon us (*fantasia*) and his capacity to purify us (closing chorale) are *musically* invoked as a context to the overtly expressed notions of corrupting heresies (recitative). The heresies are real and all around us; nevertheless God looks down upon us with a sense of pity and has the power to purify us. All three ideas are perfectly conjoined in a rich tapestry of meaning within this one phrase and Bach underlines its significance by the close canon with which the tenor's line overlaps itself in the continuo.

The fifth melodic phrase from the chorale is similarly treated (see Mus. Ex. 1, b. 7-8). Here the notion of individual choice is expressed in the recitative (one may choose this path, the other that). This is counterpointed against the abandonment of God's word (*fantasia*) and the image of the pervasive, godless multitude surrounding us (expressed in the fifth line of the closing chorale: 'Der gottlos Hauf sich umher find't'). The complex image which emerges is one of a precarious position of personal choice set, as it is, within an environment of dangerously misleading heretical doctrine. Again, different but allied perspectives are subliminally suggested by the conjoined vocal and instrumental presentation of single chorale phrases. It seems clear that Bach was deliberately employing the recognizable and familiar strains of the chorale melody as a means of drawing the listener into his world of rich imagery and multilayered meaning. Additionally, the stretto imitations suggest a poetic conjunction of parallel ideas and images merged together into the same points of time.

These two chorale lines are connected by two sections of more conventional secco recitative (b. 2-6 and 8-13). The harmonic construction of these segments has its own logic when taken within the context of the text. The chromatic A flat in the continuo (b. 2) suggests the dissonance that exists between God's word and human heresy as do the unresolved dissonances (b. 4-6) that still manage to return us to the opening key of G minor for the second chorale phrase. Similar tonal unrest marks the final four bars from the Neapolitan chord in b. 10 where the pervading image is that of the hidden putrefaction within the grave. The final cadence in D minor - not the fundamental key of G minor - is in itself a symbol of harmonic dissonance.

'Die Armen sind verstört', BWV 2/4

In BWV 2/4 for bass (see Mus. Ex. 2), a different hybrid concept emerges. Here we discover a recitative evolving into accompanied arioso without overt references to the chorale melody. The initial bass recitative (7 bars) merges into a tender arioso (11 bars) supported throughout by the continuo and upper strings. Three lines of text are retained from the chorale verse, heard at the beginning, middle (b. 9) and the end.

The initial bars of recitative portray the oppression and cries of the poor, the burdened and those misled by the enemies which afflict souls that would otherwise be devout. The sadness and sorrow is principally conveyed by the accent upon a series of chromatic, unexpectedly minor notes in the initial vocal line: D flat, C flat, A natural and G flat.¹² The upper strings provide an accompaniment of largely sustained chords above what temporarily becomes an oddly disjunctive bass line (b. 4-5). The picture is one of pain and anguish, audible sounds and cries of human distress are described in words and depicted in music. Distorted continuo and vocal melodic lines are reinforced with unsettling harmonies in order to relay the images of Mankind's unrest that results from pious souls plagued by heresy (Mus. Ex. 2).

Violino I. *p*

Violino II. *p*

Viola. *p*

Basso.

Continuo. *p*

Die Armen sind ver-stört, ihr seufzend Ach; ihr ängstlich Klagen bei so viel Kreuz und

Noth, wodurch die Feinde fromme Seelen plagen, dringt in das Gnaden-ohr des Aller-höchsten ein;

B.W. I.

¹² The passage at 'Klagen ... bei so viel Kreuz' is identified by Hirsch as a cross motif: Arthur Hirsch, *Die Zahl im Kantatenwerk J. S. Bachs* (Stuttgart: Hänssler, 1986), p. 13.

ARIOSO.

darum spricht Gott: ich muss ihr Helfer sein, ich hab' ihr Fleh'n er-hört, der Hülf'e Morgenroth, der

reinen Wahrheit heller Sonnen-schein soll sie mit neu-er Kraft, die Frost und Leben schafft, er-quick'en und erfreu-

Ich will mich ih-rer Noth er-barmen, mein heilsam Wort soll sein die Kraft der Ar-men.

R.A.W. 1.

Music Example 2, BWV 2/4, 'Die Armen sind verstört' (The poor are disturbed)

But from bar 8 everything changes. In the last measure of the recitative God has announced His resolution to assist the afflicted, the following lines of text stating unequivocally 'Ich muss ihr Helfer sein, ich hab' ihr Fleh'n erhört' (I must be their helper, I have heard their pleas). The melodic directions become predominantly rising and conjunct quaver movement appears in all parts. A light imitative touch may be heard between voice, violin 1 and continuo, suggestive of God and Man working in partnership rather than against each other. The smooth conjunct legato movement of all parts conveys an increasingly positive mood. God has heard the cries of the oppressed and offers assistance whereby His Light of Truth refreshes and strengthens the poor. Here is hope where before was only despair.

Bach has thus brought together the contrasting musical characteristics of recitative and arioso in order to depict an *emotional journey* moving from desolation to deliverance as God heeds the proffered entreaties. The dramatic and narrative possibilities of the 'hybrid' recitative become clearly apparent.

By contrast, the stanza for the tenor recitative BWV 2/2 had been essentially cohesive, dealing with one principal idea, the misery and foolishness of those who, allowing themselves to be led away from the true faith, will inevitably rot and decay. True, it suggests that each may choose his own path, thus allowing for the possibility of contrition and ultimate redemption, and brief echoes of the chorale remind us of God's purity and compassion. But there is no identifiable journey or progress apparent at this point. Indeed that cannot occur until after the alto aria in which God is beseeched to do away with heresy and perverted teachings. Only then can the complete journey be made as Bach depicts it in the ensuing bass recitative. The first recitative presents a set of circumstances, the second a spiritual transition. Hence the focus on cohesion in 2/2 and the sense of evolution in 2/4.

The ways in which Bach uses the recitatives as structural components in the overall shape of the cantata should also be noted. The opening fantasia sets a general scene of wretchedness which is made more personal and terrifying through the tenor recitative. The alto aria calls upon God to strike out perversions and preventers. The bass recitative paints the picture of fruitful and positive transition at God's intervention. The tenor aria presents a reflective axiom encapsulating the idea of redemption and purification through the cross. The closing chorale is a prayer to God to continue to shield us from the Godless. There is a clear sense of purpose and narrative in which both recitatives play a highly significant part and the precise process of redemption is *musically* represented by the seamless transition from recitative to arioso in the fourth movement.

Viewed in this way, BWV 2 is seen to be highly significant as a part of the overall picture of Bach's development of the recitative and its potential to convey complex ideas and images. But great as the possibilities latterly prove to be, Bach

¹⁵ Whittaker, *The Cantatas* (n. 3 above), vol. II, pp. 491-4, undertakes a detailed analysis of both movements without analysing their contrast.

is in no hurry to exploit them in the immediately following works, BWV 7 and 135. And whilst BWV 10/6 may be considered to divide into two parts, the latter of which (from bar 10) is characterised by a gently throbbing, metrical accompaniment in the upper strings, the vocal writing remains resolutely 'recitative' in style and feeling throughout. It is from BWV 93 onwards that Bach fully explores the dramatic, metaphoric and structural possibilities of the hybrid forms.

'Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten', BWV 93

In cantata BWV 93 Bach makes use of the chorale melody, or motives derived from it, in every one of the seven movements. The first recitative, BWV 93/2 for bass (Mus. Ex. 3), illustrates the degree of melodic integration which he obtains from the fusion of chorale and recitative. He selects four lines of text from the second verse of Neumark's hymn, each set to one of the melodic phrases (omitting the fourth and sixth). The chorale lines from the hymn have a rhetorical feel: 'Was helfen uns die schweren Sorgen? Was hilft uns unser Weh und Ach?' (Of what use are our worries and miseries? What use is our lamenting and sighing?).

Bach sets each of these lines to increasingly ornate versions of the chorale phrases (b. 1-3, 6-8, 9-11 and 15-16). Their oratorical, somewhat self-obsessed nature is underlined by the persistent, one might almost say relentless, quality of the quaver continuo line that buttresses them (Mus. Ex. 3):

RECITATIV und CHORAL.

Adagio. (Melodie: „Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten.“) Recitativ.

Basso. Was hel-fen uns die schwe-ren Sor-gen? Sie drücken nur das Herz mit Centner-

Continuo.

Adagio. Recitativ.

Pein, mit tausend Angst und Schmerz. Was hilft uns un-ser Weh und Ach? Es bringt nur bitteres Un-ge-

Adagio. Recitativ.

mach. Was hilft es, dass wir al-le Mor-gen mit Seuf-zen

Adagio.

von dem Schlaf aufstehn, und mit be-thrüntem An-ge-sicht des Nachts zu Bet-te gehn? Wir

Recitativ.

ma-chen un-ser Kreuz und Leid durch ban-ge Trau-ri-g-keit nur grö-sser. Drum

Adagio.

thut ein Christ viel besser, er trägt sein Kreuz mit christ-li-cher Ge-las-sen-heit.

Music Example 3: BWV 93/2, 'Was helfen uns die schweren Sorgen?' (What use are our worries and miseries?)

The new responding text, forming the separating bars of recitative, expands upon rather than answers the questions proffered:

- b. 1-3, chorale/arioso: 'Of what use are our worries and miseries?'
- b. 4-6, responding recitative: 'They merely oppress the heart with a multitude of pain and agonies'.

The chorale phrases become increasingly distorted, an aural equivalent of the visual experience of looking at oneself through the old fairground deforming mirrors. The continuo quavers, however, do not allow us to lose complete touch with them. The distortions of the chorale musically suggest the twisted and 'wrong' thinking of the misguided but the final four lines of text depart from both the perverse presentation of the chorale and any expressions of doubt. Simple and direct secco recitative now conveys the text of Christian truth; the true believer bears his cross with a sense of divine composure *simply because* he has undergone the experiences of sorrow and distress.

For musical cohesion Bach concludes the movement with a brief reiteration of the quaver bass which hitherto had been used to only underline the chorale phrases.

'Nimm von uns, Herr, du treuer Gott', BWV 101

In cantata BWV 101 Bach utilises hybrid structures to determine, in part, the cantata's chiasmic structure. The theme of the work is an entreaty to God to comfort and deliver us rather than to inflict harsh punishments. The opening D minor fantasia depicts a war-ravished landscape, a graphic warning to us all, and the closing chorale is a simple plea for protection and guidance to an eternal life. The central keystone movement, 101/4, is a bass aria conveying a vivid picture of the flames of divine rage counterpointed against the almost naive question, 'Why are You so angry with us?'. This is set to the repeated first chorale phrase (b. 9-11 and 17-19), its simplicity and familiarity suggesting a childlike innocence and lack of comprehension. The plea to abandon punishments in recognition of our inherent weaknesses is articulated through recitative from bar 40. The oboes continue to echo the first chorale phrase, reminders of the fundamental human condition which includes the incapacity to understand God's will.

Space does not allow for a complete analysis of the two recitatives which abut this pivotal aria, 101/3 for soprano (Mus.Ex. 4) and 101/5 for tenor (Mus. Ex. 5). Both are hybrid movements in which the complete chorale melody (and verse) is encapsulated within an otherwise continuous recitative. Both are supported by a continuo ritornello which begins and ends each movement and accompanies the chorale phrases. Both use the lines of chorale text to make clear entreaties or assertions and the ensuing recitative to expand upon these statements with specific examples or colloquial elucidation, as at the beginning of BWV 101/3:

Chorale: 'Die Sünd' hat uns verderbet sehr' (Sin has seriously corrupted us).
 Recitative: 'So müssen auch die Frömmsten sagen / und mit betränten Augen klagen' (Even the most pious must admit this and, indeed, mourn it with tears in their eyes).

However, there is a subtle difference in the perspectives of these two movements which Bach encapsulates in purely musical terms.¹⁵ The chorale lines of 101/3 (Mus. Ex. 4) are, like the majority of this cantata, addressed directly to the Lord ('O Lord, through Your fidelity, show Yourself to us with mercy rather than through punishments!'): see Mus. Ex. 4.

RECITATIV und CHORAL. (Melodie: „Vater unser im Himmelreich:“)
a tempo.

Soprano.

Continuo.

Acht!
piano

Recitativ.

Herr Gott, durch die Treue dein wird unser Land in
 Fried' und Ruhe sein. Wenn uns ein Unglücks-Wetter droht, so rufen wir, barmherziger Gott, zu
 dir in solcher Noth: mit Trost und Rettung unser

Music Example 4: BWV 101/3, 'Ach! Herr Gott, durch die Treue dein' (O Lord, through Your fidelity)

The chorale lines in 101/5 (Mus. Ex. 5), however, begin with a more personal series of introspections including ‘Sin has corrupted us, the devil continues to torment us and both the world and our very flesh lead us astray’: see Mus. Ex. 5.

RECITATIV und CHORAL. (Melodie: „Vater unser im Himmelreich.“)

Tenore. Continuo.

der - bet sehr', so müssen auch die Frömmsten sa - gea, und mit be - thränten Au - gen kla - gen:

Recitativ. a tempo.

Music Example 5: BWV 101/5, ‘Die Sünd’ hat uns verderbet sehr’ (Sin has seriously corrupted us)

Bach marks the difference of perspective by contrasted presentations of the chorale melody. In 101/3 the chorale is set in triple time (against the recitative sections in common time) and it is ornamented to a degree which, at times, virtually disguises it. The chorale appears in every one of the seven movements bar the second and it seems that here Bach feels no need to render it instantly recognisable. But in 101/5 the emphasis upon *individual reflection* and the *corrupting power of sin* makes the simple, unadorned presentation of the familiar chorale melody all the more personal and poignant. Schweitzer¹⁶ entirely missed the point of these movements because he failed to appreciate their basic conception: a combination of disparate structural principles in order to unite idea, feeling, image and metaphor with great expressive power. Furthermore they play an important part in the determination of the cantata’s macro-structure.

Conclusion: Bach as developer of the recitative form

A study of the hybrid recitatives thus illuminates much of Bach’s approach to text and its musical setting. The density of these movements contrasts sharply with the recitatives of Bach’s contemporary opera composers whose recitatives tend to frame and allow space for actions and reactions of the actors but often lack musical substance.¹⁷ With Bach, chorale interpolations, ritornello sections and arioso segments are never introduced arbitrarily. There are musical structural imperatives of course but decisions to combine the different elements arise

¹⁶ Schweitzer, *Johann Sebastian Bach* (n. 1 above), vol. II, p. 375.

¹⁷ On this matter, see also the contribution of Reinhold Kubik and Margit Legler to this issue.

principally from *textual* ideas, statements, images, metaphors, and their implications; thus are the shapes of these pieces determined. Whilst Bach made full use of the degrees of latitude available to him in the shaping of choruses and arias, it was the recitatives which allowed him the ultimate freedom to determine wholly unique forms and patterns. These paid less heed to traditional constraints and developed inimitable and multi-layered expression of the texts he was given to set.