

# BACH'S ORGAN CHORALES FROM THE NEUMEISTER COLLECTION

## AN IMPORTANT RECOVERY

John David Peterson

Christoph Wolff's announcement of the discovery of hitherto unknown organ works of Johann Sebastian Bach burst on the American musical consciousness in an article in *The New York Times* on December 19, 1984.<sup>1</sup> What was billed as "the first public performance" was presented in Battell Chapel of Yale University on March 17, 1985, by John Ferris and Charles Krigbaum and broadcast over the American Public Radio Network.<sup>2</sup> This was not the discovery of a single work, but one of over 30 "new" pieces. These are not mature works, but works from the first decade of the 18th century which enable us to see Bach's early development as a composer with greater clarity. Nor is the attribution to Bach impossible to verify. Previously known works of several composers are attributed correctly in this source, a fact which lends credibility to its ascription of the "new" pieces to Johann Sebastian Bach.<sup>3</sup>

The manuscript which has caused all the excitement is cataloged in the John Herrick Jackson Music Library of Yale University as LM 4708 and is entitled *Choräle ohne Texte*. It was compiled by Johann Gottfried Neumeister sometime after 1790. Neumeister had been a pupil of Georg Andreas Sorge, who like Bach was a member of the Mizler Society. From Neumeister the collection passed to Christian Heinrich Rinck (a pupil of Johann Christian Kittel, who was a Bach pupil), whose library was purchased by Lowell Mason in 1852 and bequeathed to Yale University in 1873.<sup>4</sup>

The late date of the copy is deceptive. The *Neumeister Collection* is "decidedly retrospective from a late-18th-century perspective"<sup>5</sup> and includes settings of chorales which by that time had fallen out of use.<sup>6</sup> Notational aspects of the manuscript also suggest an earlier origin. Flats are not cancelled by naturals, but by sharps, a convention which J.S. Bach abandoned around 1715.<sup>7</sup> Obvious musical errors include some which are typical in transcribing German keyboard tablature, a notation rarely used after 1710.<sup>8</sup> The absence of "Neumeister" settings in copies by Krebs and Walther also points to an origin earlier than 1710.<sup>9</sup>

The *Neumeister Collection* appears to have been begun in an arrangement similar to that of *Orgelbüchlein*: chorales of the liturgical season, beginning with Advent, are followed by chorales of general topics. At some point, however, the original plan gave way to the simple collection of chorale settings, many on the subject of death. A second setting of *Ich ruf' zu dir* occupies a place half a volume away from the first, and seasonal chorales are placed among topical ones.<sup>10</sup>

The *Neumeister Collection* contains 82 works, of which 38 (nearly half) are attributed to Johann Sebastian Bach; of these, 30 were completely unknown. The only other composer represented nearly as substantially is Johann Michael Bach, Sebastian's father-in-law, with 25, among them the trio on *In dulci jubilo* once thought to be by his son-in-law (BWV 751). Other composers are Georg Andreas Sorge, Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow, Johann Christoph Bach, Daniel Erich and Johann Pachelbel; the authors of five works are unnamed.<sup>11</sup>

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The eight works known previously include *Vater unser* (BWV 737), as well as a version of the canonic *Ach Gott und Herr* (BWV 714) with an extended introduction. *Mach's mit mir, Gott, nach deiner Güt'* (BWV 957) had not previously been recognized as an organ chorale and was published in Vol. 42 of the Bach-Gesellschaft edition as *Fugue in G Major* without the appended four-voice setting which it has in Neumeister.<sup>12</sup> The first 25 bars of *Christe, der du bist Tag und Licht* (BWV 1096) had been attributed to Johann Pachelbel.<sup>13</sup> Two other works, earlier excluded from the Bach canon, are the fughetto *Der Tag, der ist so freudenreich* (BWV 719, labeled "doubtful" in *The New Grove Bach Family*) and the ornamented *Ach Herr, mich armen Sünder* (BWV 742, labeled "spurious").<sup>14</sup> There are also two pieces from the *Orgelbüchlein*: *Herr Christ, der ein'ge Gottes Sohn* (BWV 601) and *Ich ruf' zu dir* (BWV 639), both with slight variants, which suggests that they are preliminary versions.<sup>15</sup>

The *Orgelbüchlein* is an important point of reference here. Begun in 1714, it included some works that may date from as early as 1710.<sup>16</sup> Very few of Bach's previously known organ chorales are thought to have been written earlier than that, and they do not resemble the "Orgelbüchlein-type." Among them are "congregational chorales" with brilliant flourishes in between phrases (such as *Lobt Gott, ihr Christen, allzugleich*, BWV 732) associated, rightly or wrongly, with Bach's rebuke from the church authorities in Arnstadt in 1706.<sup>17</sup> Chorale fantasies (such as *Christ lag in Todesbanden*, BWV 718) show the influence of North German writing, which may have been observed by Bach as early as his years in Lüneburg (1700-1703).

There are pieces in the *Neumeister Collection* which share the exuberance of these other youthful works. But there are also quite a number of pieces in a more reticent style that bespeak a different tradition. Illustrative of this is a group of harmonizations (such as *Das alte Jahr vergangen ist*, BWV 1091) in which the melody is stated in the top voice over a three-voice contrapuntal accompaniment which is only occasionally derived from the melody. There are also settings in which the treatment of musical figures foreshadows the technique of the *Orgelbüchlein* (*Als Jesus Christus in der Nacht*, BWV 1108). The relationship between these settings and those in *Orgelbüchlein* is easy to see, whereas the relationship between the chorale fantasies and *Orgelbüchlein* is problematic, at best.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the works in the *Orgelbüchlein* is the internal consistency of each prelude. More than a few pieces in the *Neumeister Collection* contain two or three distinct musical treatments. In some the accompaniment motif changes with each phrase, while in others the application of the chorale-motet principle is inconsistent. In many, the individual phrases of the cantus firmus appear in different voices, and, in one, the key of the cantus firmus actually changes.

Another characteristic of the *Orgelbüchlein*, mentioned on its title page, is the use of obbligato pedal. (This can be taken as a sign of the separation of organ and harpsichord styles.) In the *Neumeister Collection* the use of pedal is directed in only four pieces, though its use for other bass lines and cantus firmi would certainly be idiomatic. Broken-chord figures and

low placement of chords also suggest that the distinction between harpsichord and organ style is not yet clear, and the presence of repeated-note figures recalls earlier keyboard writing.

The titles of all but three of the Bach works in the *Neumeister Collection* are in the original plan for the *Orgelbüchlein*.<sup>18</sup> Because the settings in the *Orgelbüchlein* represent a fairly unified musical approach which is different from those in the *Neumeister Collection*, it is unlikely that Bach intended to include these earlier works. It is more likely that these pieces are all that is left of a larger repertoire with which Bach the organist provided functional music for services and through which Bach the composer learned his craft.

The discussion of individual pieces follows the contents of the publication *Organ Chorales from the Neumeister Collection* (Yale University Press—Bärenreiter), which contains 35 of the 38 works attributed to J. S. Bach.<sup>19</sup> They are grouped here according to general formal characteristics.

**Der Tag, der ist so freudenreich** (BWV 719)  
**Erhalt' uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort** (BWV 1103)  
**Wir glauben all' an einen Gott** (BWV 1098)

The *Neumeister Collection* contains three pieces of the chorale-fugue or -fughetta type. Typically these are short fugues on a subject derived from the first phrase of the chorale.

*Der Tag, der ist so freudenreich* consists of two fughettas—one on the first phrase (mm. 1–24) and one on the second (mm. 27–end) separated by a brief cadenza-like passage. This work, once considered genuine, was published in the *Bach Gesellschaft* and derivative editions.

*Erhalt' uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort* is written in three voices until m. 22, when a fourth voice enters. A lone statement of the last phrase of the hymn is heard in the soprano in the last three bars.

*Wir glauben all' an einen Gott* is larger in scope and includes obvious strettos of the subject as well as two state-

ments of the second phrase (mm. 19–21 and 55–58). The two settings of this chorale published by Bach in *Klavier-Übung* (BWV 680, 681) are also a fugue and a fughetta. His choice of a form based on only one or two phrases may have been occasioned by the extreme length of the chorale.

**Christe, der du bist Tag und Licht** (BWV 1096)  
**Mach's mit mir, Gott, nach deiner Güt'** (BWV 957)  
**Durch Adam's Fall ist ganz verderbt** (BWV 1101)

In three settings, a completely worked-out fughetta is followed without a breath by a line-by-line setting. The fughetta of one of these, *Christe, der du bist Tag und Licht*, was one attributed to Johann Pachelbel. The transition that begins in m. 26 includes one more subject statement (tenor, mm. 28–30) before the three bottom voices relinquish the chorale melody to the soprano.

*Mach's mit mir, Gott, nach deiner Güt'*, published in the *Bach-Gesellschaft* edition as a harpsichord fugue, consists of a 25-bar fughetta followed by a simple harmonization of the melody. The subject of the fughetta is a busy elaboration of the first chorale phrase (Examples 1 and 2) to which occasional references to other phrases seem to be added (Example 3).

Example 1



Example 2

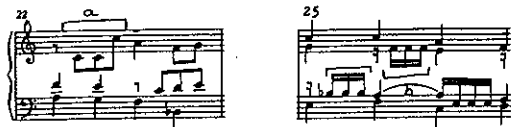


BWV	Chorale Title	Category	371 Chorales	Other Bach Settings
719	Der Tag, der ist so freudenreich or: Ein Kindelein so lobelich	Christmas	158	BWV 605
1090	Wir Christenleut'	Christmas	321	612m, 710
1091	Das alte Jahr vergangen ist	Christmas	162	614
1092	Herr Gott, nun schleuss den Himmel auf	New Year		617
1093	Herzliebster Jesu	Presentation	59	
1094	O Jesu, wie ist dein Gestalt	Passion		
1095	O Lamm Gottes unschuldig	Passion	165	618, 656, n.v.1
1096	Christe, der du bist Tag und Licht or: Wir danken dir	Evening	245	
1097	Ehre sei dir, Christe	Passion	202 (O wir armen Sünder)	
1098	Wir glauben all' an einen Gott	Passion	133	680, 681
1099	Aus tiefer Not (major mode melody)	Creed	318 (Herr, wie du willst)	
1100	Allein zu dir	Penitence	13	
714	Ach Gott und Herr (minor mode melody)	Penitence		
742	Ach Herr, mich armen Sünder	Penitence	367 (Befiehl du deine Wege)	727
1101	Durch Adam's Fall	Faith	126	637
1102	Du Friedefürst, Herr Jesu Christ	Prayer	42	
1103	Erhalt' uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort	Reformation	72	
1104	Wenn dich Unglück tut greifen an	Faith, Trust		
1105	Jesu, meine Freude	Jesus-Lied	96	610; 713
1106	Gott ist mein Heil	Trust		
1107	Jesu, meines Lebens Leben	Passion		
1108	Als Jesus Christus in der Nacht	Communion	180	
1109	Ach Gott, tu dich erbarmen	Penitence		
1110	O Herre Gott, dein göttlich's Wort	Reformation	14	
1111	Nun lasst uns den Leib begraben	Funeral		
1112	Christus, der ist mein Leben	Funeral	6	
1113	Ich hab' mein Sach' Gott heimgestellt	Funeral	19	
1114	Herr Jesu Christ, du höchstes Gut	Penitence	73	
1115	Herzlich lieb hab ich dich, O Herr	Christian Life	58	
1116	Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan	Trust	65	
1117	Alle Menschen müssen sterben	Funeral		643
957	Mach's mit mir, Gott	Funeral	310	
1118	Werde munter, mein Gemüte	Evening	233	
1119	Wie nach einer Wasserquelle	Trust		
1120	Christ, der du bist der helle Tag	Evening	230	766 (partita)



Another work using this format is *Durch Adam's Fall ist ganz verderbt*. Here the fughetta-like introduction is more in proportion to the rest of the piece and seems to function as a long beginning of a chorale-motet. Each line of the chorale in the second section (beginning in m. 12) is preceded by pre-imitation either of the chorale phrase itself or of material derived from it. The motifs preceding and underlying the fifth phrase show two different variations: octave displacement (Example 4a) and double diminution of the first three notes (Example 4b). The return of the first phrase in m. 33 is accompanied by a return of the decoration of that phrase heard in the first twelve bars (Example 5).

Example 4



Example 5



**Ach Herr, mich armen Sünder** (BWV 742)  
**Du Friedefürst, Herr Jesu Christ** (BWV 1102)  
**Herr Jesu Christ, du höchstes Gut** (BWV 1114)

The lone example of an ornamented setting in the *Neumeister Collection* is *Ach Herr, mich armen Sünder*, once thought spurious and in fact published before now only in one common edition, the old (1881) Peters Edition, Vol. 9, now available as Vol. 9 of Kalmus. A *suspirans* figure in 32nd notes alternates with 16ths to decorate this melody, and the whole is framed with cadenza-like arpeggios. The accompaniment, marked OW in another source,<sup>20</sup> is presumably only for manual, like the accompaniments of *Jesus, meine Zuversicht* (BWV 728) and *Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten* (BWV 691).

Two other works with a degree of ornamentation but of another sort are *Du Friedefürst, Herr Jesu Christ* and *Herr Jesu Christ, du höchstes Gut*. Both of these are strongly reminiscent of partita movements such as Partita II of both *O Gott, du frommer Gott* (BWV 767) and *Christ, der du bist der helle Tag* (BWV 766). *Du Friedefürst* is actually in two verses and entirely in two voices. The first verse (mm. 1-29) has the cello-like bass line and the angular melodic ornamentation of a partita movement. The second (*Allegro*, m. 29-end) is in a broken-chord texture that seems more at home on the harpsichord than it does on the organ. Chorale phrases in this verse are separated by passages in triplets.

*Herr Jesu Christ, du höchstes Gut* is also written with two different textures, but here the solo with two-voice accompaniment with which it begins (mm. 1-14) returns for the last line in m. 27. In the intervening measures the three voices are equal participants in a contrapuntal texture.

The sectionalism noteworthy in these and others would be abandoned by Bach in his later organ chorales. It was an important factor in the style of much of his music from the first decade of the 18th century, and one can look outside the organ literature to *Cantata 106 (Actus tragicus)* and the *Capriccio on the Departure of His Most Beloved Brother* (BWV 992) to see the same sort of thing.

**Wir Christenleut'** (BWV 1090)  
**Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir** (BWV 1099)  
**Herzlich lieb hab ich dich, O Herr** (BWV 1115)  
**Christ, der du bist der helle Tag** (BWV 1120)  
**Herr Gott, nun schleuss den Himmel auf** (BWV 1092)  
**Jesu, meine Freude** (BWV 1105)

A number of settings display brash changes of texture. In *Wir Christenleut'* an initial treatment in 16th notes that has the cohesiveness of *Orgelbüchlein* gives way to 12/8 meter for five bars. The last section is entirely in dotted rhythm.

*Aus tiefer Not* has even more dramatic changes, including one of tempo (*Adagio*, m. 36, where the soprano voice assumes a solo role).

*Herzlich lieb hab ich dich, O Herr* also vacillates between 4/4 and 12/8, between clear and decorated melodic statements, between light textures and thick ones. Its opening motif is very similar to the motif used by Walther in his setting of the same chorale.

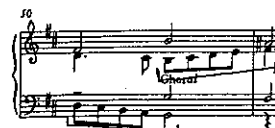
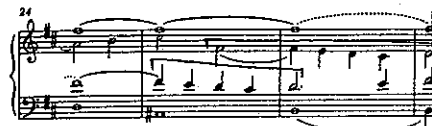
*Christ, der du bist der helle Tag* resembles more than any a partita movement, with its echoes interrupting melodic statements.

Two other works contain similar contrasts, but their effect is one of greater unity because the different textures return and alternate. In *Herr Gott, nun schleuss den Himmel auf* chordal statements with interruptions within the phrases interlock with figured statements in running 16th notes. In *Jesu, meine Freude* each half (mm. 1-6; 7-13) seems to contain an acceleration of motion from quarter-note chords to running 16ths until the last phrase is stated in chords (mm. 14-end). The cantus firmus moves from voice to voice as it does in the large setting, BWV 713.

**Ach, Gott und Herr** (BWV 714)

The canonic setting of *Ach, Gott und Herr* is well known and is the only chorale canon among Bach's authenticated uncollected chorale settings. In the *Neumeister Collection*, a 37-bar introduction precedes the canon, full of chromatic tension and suspensions, like an Italian *toccata di durezza e ligatura*. Some motifs from the canonic section are heard in the introduction.

Example 6



## Ich hab' mein Sach' Gott heimgestellt (BWV 1113)

*Ich hab' mein Sach' Gott heimgestellt* presents the entire chorale in a four-part harmonization. Each phrase is preceded by a fugato which comes to a complete stop before the chorale phrase, and is followed by an echo of its last four notes, marked piano. The formal approach is unusual and suggests a transcription of a setting in which choral phrases are introduced by orchestral ritornelli. It is possible to expand the sense of the forte and piano markings by using pedal only during the chorale statements and/or by using three manuals: one for the ritornelli, another for the chorale phrases, and a third for the echoes.

**Das alte Jahr vergangen ist** (BWV 1091)  
**Herzliebster Jesu, was hast du verbrochen** (BWV 1093)  
**O Jesu, wie ist dein Gestalt** (BWV 1094)  
**O Lamm Gottes unschuldig** (BWV 1095)  
**Wenn dich Unglück tut greifen an** (BWV 1104)

Five chorales in the *Neumeister Collection* are set by Bach as rather simple harmonizations with interludes between phrases. In each the entire cantus firmus is heard in the soprano with little or no elaboration. In all but one the melody begins on the first beat of the piece.

*Das alte Jahr vergangen ist* does contain a pre-imitative statement of the third phrase in the tenor (mm. 15-17), but this is an isolated instance. *Herzliebster Jesu, was hast du verbrochen* is remarkable for its chromaticism and for its imitative treatment which includes statements in inversion. *O Jesu, wie ist dein Gestalt* includes one pre-imitative statement and, in mm. 12b-15b, a fully developed fugato before the chorale statement. *O Lamm Gottes unschuldig* contains the greatest motivic cohesion of any of these harmonizations with interludes. *Wenn dich Unglück tut greifen an* also contains some quasi-imitative interludes.

The consistent four-voice texture invites a number of performance possibilities: manualiter; the top three voices on one manual, bass in the pedal; soprano voice on a separate manual with bass in the pedal; or soprano on a high-pitched pedal stop accompanied on the manual. The individual characteristics of each of these five—the decoration at the end of *Das alte Jahr vergangen ist* or the presence of 16th notes in the bass in *Herzliebster Jesu, was hast du verbrochen*—suggest that one mode of performance need not be adopted uniformly for all five.

**Ehre sei dir, Christe, der du leidest Not** (BWV 1097)  
**Ach Gott, tu dich erbarmen** (BWV 1109)  
**Nun lasst uns den Leib begraben** (BWV 1111)  
**Christus, der ist mein Leben** (BWV 1112)  
**Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan** (BWV 1116)  
**Wie nach einer Wasserquelle** (BWV 1119)

The chorale motets in the *Neumeister Collection* range from those with extremely systematic pre-imitations to those with a somewhat looser organization in which some accompaniment motifs are less clearly related to the chorale. In some, the proportions of the organ setting match those of the chorale, while in some the treatment of one phrase is proportionally longer than the treatment of others.

Bach set each pair of lines of *Ehre sei dir, Christe, der du leidest Not* as a unit, so that the opening of each of the first four chorale statements consists of four quarter-notes on the same pitch. The words *Ehre sei dir, Christe* form the last stanza of the chorale *O wir armen Sünder*. Differences in the melody and the scope of the last phrase (*Kyrie eleison*) suggest that Bach's harmonization (371 Chorales, No. 202) is based on a different version than the *Neumeister* setting.

The first pre-imitation of *Ach Gott, tu dich erbarmen* is also quite long. The modal flavor of the melody gives this setting an archaic sound. The texture allows for the chorale statements beginning in m. 19 to be played on a high-pitched pedal stop.

In *Nun lasst uns den Leib begraben* the composer set two of the phrases in 4/4 (mm. 1-20; 21-30) and two in 3/4 (mm. 30-35; 35-end). This change is not nearly as dramatic as the changes in *Christ, der du bist der helle Tag* (BWV 1120), and is reminiscent of the changes of texture in *In dich hab' ich gehoffet, Herr* (BWV 712) and *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland* (BWV 666).

*Christus, der ist mein Leben* and *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan* are similar in their proportions and in their consistency of motivic treatment.

*Wie nach einer Wasserquelle* is strictly in three voices. The texture is that of a trio with two active lower voices supporting chorale statements in the top voice. Bach would later write a much more complex version of this texture in *Nun komm' der Heiden Heiland*. The change in the soprano voice in m. 32 foreshadows in an unpretentious way the flourish at the close of *Komm, heiliger Geist* (BWV 652).

**Alle Menschen müssen sterben** (BWV 1117)  
**Allein zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ** (BWV 1100)  
**Gott ist mein Heil, mein Hilf und Trost** (BWV 1106)  
**Jesu, Meines Lebens Leben** (BWV 1107)  
**Als Jesus Christus in der Nacht** (BWV 1108)  
**O Herre Gott, dein göttlich's Wort** (BWV 1110)  
**Werde munter, mein Gemüte** (BWV 1118)

Nowhere in the *Neumeister Collection* did the composer come closer to the style of the *Orgelbüchlein* as in those settings where a figural counterpoint accompanies a systematic, line-by-line presentation of the chorale. The *Neumeister* settings are not always in four voices, nor do they usually require pedal. The figuration sometimes changes from phrase to phrase and the cantus firmus moves from one voice to another. Yet it is in the use of figures that these pieces foreshadow the technique of the *Orgelbüchlein* most clearly.

In *Alle Menschen müssen sterben* a motif of four 16th notes is used throughout the first 16 bars, sometimes extended by inversion (Example 7a), sometimes alternating between two voices (Example 7b).

Example 7a



Example 7b



The texture in mm. 9-10 and the low register of the chords in m. 21 and 25-27 suggest a stringed keyboard instrument rather than the organ. In mm. 17-24 is an ornamented repetition of the last four phrases (mm. 9-16). The inclusion of a repetition not required by the chorale text is found in several of the *Orgelbüchlein* works: *Herr Christ, der ein'ge Gottes Sohn* (BWV 601), *Wir Christenleut'* (BWV 612), *Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend'* (BWV 632), and *Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier* (BWV 634, 633).<sup>21</sup>

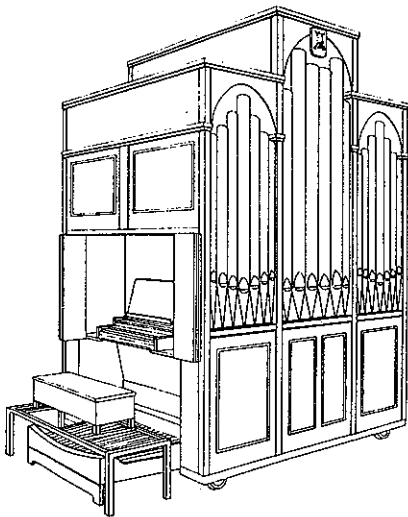
*Allein zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ* does not rely on only one motif, but introduces new ones in mm. 15 and 21. The trade in register of the motifs which accompany the repeated phrase (mm. 15-17 and 19-20) is particularly attractive.

*Gott ist mein Heil, mein Hilf und Trost* includes repetitions of phrases and parts of phrases beginning in m. 12, a quasi-developmental technique which recalls the chorale fantasias of Buxtehude.

The change in meter in m. 13 of *Jesu, meines Lebens Leben* and the assignment of the last two lines of cantus firmus to the pedal are probably derived from the text. The words of the last two lines of each verse of the chorale are identical, forming a kind of refrain which Bach matched in the organ treatment.

The two verses of *Als Jesus Christus in der Nacht* are built on the same motif, the first verse in 8ths, the *Variatio* in 16ths. The first part is strictly in four voices with the cantus firmus in the soprano. The *Variatio* is basically in three voices, occasionally in four. Its cantus firmus appears in top,

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middle and bottom voices. The two verses of this organ chorale may be taken to represent an earlier setting (Variatio), technically less polished; and a later one (the first part), in which the composer's craft is more sophisticated.

In the chorale *O Herre Gott, dein göttlich's Wort* the first two phrases are both repeated immediately and recapitulated at the end. In Bach's setting, all three occurrences are given an individual treatment (mm. 9-17, 18-26, 38-end). The introduction of 16th notes at the end of m. 26 gives this piece a balanced two-part structure.

The cantus firmus of *Werde munter, mein Gemüte* moves back and forth among the different voices. In m. 13 the key of the cantus shifts abruptly from G major to D major, where it remains through m. 16. In m. 18b the tonic returns for the final repetition of the last two phrases.

The chorale settings in the *Neumeister Collection* are remarkable for their variety and their richness. Our outlook on the music of Bach's mature years is enriched by the recovery of these simple pieces, since they occupy a position at the very beginning of his work. They increase by about 20 percent the number of chorale-based works of Bach which have survived. More importantly, they increase the depth of our understanding of all of those works.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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#### NOTES

1. Will Crutchfield, "Organ Preludes Attributed to Bach Found at Yale," *The New York Times*, Dec. 19, 1984, p. C19.
2. Other performances are reported to have taken place as early as March 18, 1982. See Wilhelm Krumbach, *Sechzig unbekannte Orgelwerke von Johann Sebastian Bach?* (2 parts), part 1, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, March 1985, pp. 4-12. n. 1.
3. Christoph Wolff, "Bach's Organ Music: Studies and Discoveries," *The Musical Times*, March 1985, p. 151.
4. Christoph Wolff, *Preface to Johann Sebastian Bach, Organ Chorales from the Neumeister Collection* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p. vi.
5. *Preface*, p. vi.
6. Krumbach, p. 6.
7. *Preface*, p. vii.
8. Krumbach, p. 7.
9. Hermann Zietz, *Quellenkritische Untersuchungen an den Bach-Handschriften P 801, P 802, und P 803 aus dem "Krebs'schen Nachlass" unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Choralbearbeitungen des jungen J. S. Bach*, *Hamburger Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft*, ed. Georg von Dadelsen (Hamburg: Verlag der Musikalienhandlung, Karl Dieter Wagner, 1969), p. 111.
10. Krumbach, pp. 10-11.
11. *Preface*, p. vi.
12. *Preface*, n. 3.
13. Krumbach, part 2, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, May 1985, p. 6. The editor of the Pachelbel organ works, Max Seiffert, commented that this work seemed to be only part of a larger setting. See the preface to Johann Pachelbel, *Orgelkompositionen, Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Bayern*, IV/1, p. xviii.
14. *The New Grove Bach Family* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1983), p. 206.
15. *Preface*, p. vii.
16. Zietz, p. 111.
17. Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel, eds., *The Bach Reader*, rev. ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1966), p. 52.
18. *Jesu, meines Lebens Leben* (BWV 1107), *Als Jesus Christus in der Nacht* (BWV 1108), and *Ich hab' mein Sach' Gott heimgestellt* (BWV 1113).
19. The other three are easily available: *Herr Christ, der ein'ge Gottes Sohn* (BWV 601) and *Ich ruf zu dir* (BWV 639) are in the *Orgelbüchlein*. *Vater unser* (BWV 737) is one of the uncollected organ chorales.
20. *Preface*, p. viii.
21. The repetitions in *Wir Christenleut'* and *Liebster Jesu* are printed correctly in both the Concordia edition of *Orgelbüchlein*, Robert Clark and John David Peterson, eds. (St. Louis, 1984); and in the *Neue Bach-Ausgabe*, Heinz-Harald Löhlein, ed. (Kassel: Bärenreiter Verlag), Series IV, Vol. 1.

# BACH'S ORGAN CHORALES FROM THE NEUMEISTER COLLECTION

## FIRST EDITION AND RECORDINGS A FEATURE REVIEW

Peter Williams

### Johann Sebastian Bach

*Organ Chorales from the Neumeister Collection*, first edition, ed. C. Wolff. Bärenreiter 5181 and Yale University Press (= NBA IV/?). International Music Sales, Toronto, Ont., \$28.65, plus postage and handling.

*Chorale Preludes (Yale Manuscript)* played by Joseph Payne at St. Paul's, Brookline Mass. HMC 5158 (HM 59 = one disc). Harmonia Mundi USA, Los Angeles, Calif., \$11.98.

*The Arnstadt Chorale Preludes* played by Werner Jacob at Arlesheim Cathedral. EMI Angel DSB-3986 (two discs). Capitol Industries, Hollywood, Calif.

I suppose it was the rush to appear during the Tercentennial that led to there being at first no agreed title for the by now very famous "newly discovered chorales by J. S. Bach," although I believe that Wilhelm Krumbach always called them "Neumeister Collection" from the time that he publicized his claim and began playing the pieces during 1984. The different titles in these three publications—the text itself (stamped with the imprimatur of the New Bach Edition) and two disc recordings (competing with the many radio tape recordings that have been circulating)—are not the only detail to raise one's eyebrows. Payne claims for his recording the "World Premiere," Jacob, "World Premier Recording." Wolff obtained BWV numbers for the chorales (a miracle to those of us despairing of the Neue Bach-Ausgabe's tardiness in so many other areas, such as the printing of critical reports), while Payne thought that "no cataloging exists" and could not therefore give any numbering. Jacob includes also the "Eight Little Preludes and Fugues," despite a jacket note (badly written and out of date) pointing out their inauthenticity. And like so much other literature concerning these pieces, not least newspaper and TV releases, Payne refers to the "authentication" of these chorales by Dr. Wolff.

Now perhaps as a foreigner I have not understood the shades of meaning of that word in common American parlance, but to me the only person who could authenticate anything (except in the speculative manner used by auction houses, for example, when they claim such-and-such an origin for a painting) is the creative source itself, i.e., J. S. Bach. All a modern scholar can do is

commit himself to the opinion, founded on wide experience and wise musicianship in the best instances, that the chorales are "probably the work of J. S. Bach." I cannot help but say that so much of what I have read on the issue implies that Wilhelm Krumbach (usually referred to as "the organist Wilhelm Krumbach") expressed merely an interesting opinion but was in no position to back that opinion with what I have called "wide experience and wise musicianship." Maybe relatively he was not; but who, really, has a right to say?

Krumbach made another interesting speculation some years ago, namely that some of Beethoven's fugal sketches were ultimately based on *The Art of Fugue* theme. It was perhaps a bit naughty to record them as "Beethoven's organ works," but he is not the only person to use evidence in a (shall we say) idiosyncratic way. Mr. Payne predisposes me against his publication by quoting two passages from my BBC booklet *Bach Organ Music* not only without acknowledgment but also without accuracy. Dr. Wolff's notes to Werner Jacob's discs make better reading, of course, and combined with the preface to his NBA volume, raise some crucial questions that will occupy Bach scholars for many years to come. Even there, though, I am still rather puzzled by the references to the *Orgelbüchlein* and its relationship to these earlier chorales. Even by closely following Dr. Wolff's reasoning, I find it hard to agree that "the basic idea and structure of the chorale of the *Orgelbüchlein* type [are] that of J.M. [Johann Michael] Bach"; it seems to me that that is exactly what is not the case. It may be that some of the figural harmonization in the *Orgelbüchlein* or some of the chorale textures do, faintly, remind one of J.M. Bach; but the "basic idea and structure" (interlude-less motivic harmonizations with separately conceived pedal basses) are precisely what are J.S. Bach's own. Probably we would each find different words to make the same point, so there may not be disagreement here. Either way, the NBA volume's preface is full of interesting points, particularly the one that these chorales may once have existed in the form of an album corresponding to the "free works" transmitted by other early albums, such as the *Andreas Bach Book*. As for the two *Orgelbüchlein* chorales that do actually ap-

pear in the Yale MS (BWV 601 and 639), I do think that they are two of the last in that album to strike one as early works, no matter what the source reading is. Clearly, in short, the MS has only so far allowed us to glimpse a few of the many questions that are going to be thought about in the coming years.

Two quibbles about the NBA volume: it is a pity that the texts (one verse only, perhaps) and customary melodic forms are not given, in the manner of other NBA volumes. I think that only *Wie nach einer Wasserquelle* offers any particular difficulty. Secondly, prospective buyers might like to remember that Bärenreiter's German price is DM29, which is a good deal less than here in the U.S.

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Most organists now will know that there are some pretty good and some pretty bad pieces amongst the 33 chorales, and one might hope in particular to learn from a performance whether the "pretty bad" settings really are poor or can come to life with the right kind of organ, articulation, playing style, etc.

Mr. Payne makes a better case in some ways, Mr. Jacob in others. Both take the view that they can "score up": these chorales for second manuals, pedals (bass or cantus firmus), changes of registration and a generally inventive treatment, and both make that view convincingly. On the face of it, Payne has an "older" technique, with much thoughtful articulation and phrasing; but it does seem to me at times a little strange. For example, while the colorful treatment of BWV 1100, 1106 and 1119 gives some idea of that quality in early Bach that Keller (by no means foolishly) called "a certain wildness," in others (BWV 1090, 1111) the mostly *détaché* playing seems to me not very musical in one particular respect—it brings out too many strong beats to the measure. This is a common fault with visiting Europeans who introduce "old fingering" to American organists, who then are deflected from studying more important sources of information, e.g., how it is that a good (Baroque) violinist views phraseology. Also, Payne seems often to achieve the wrong *Affekt* in a piece; *Alle Menschen müssen sterben* is positively perky, and I do not hear anything of the Penitential Psalmist in BWV 1099. Nor can one always be confident of his musical text

(BWV 1101, 1092); and to omit the second half of BWV 714 I personally find almost as upsetting as suddenly stopping in the so-called unfinished fugue of *The Art of Fugue*.

Jacob, on the other hand, gives the extra pieces in the Yale MS (BWV 714, 719, 737, 742 and 957) and has a gentle, leisurely and frankly often slow way with the pieces that even players disliking the continuous, even keel, now outmoded German legato organ playing could enjoy. The reason is, I think, that despite the too-distant recording of the Arlesheim organ, the severe continuity, the unconvincing ornamentation and

(most importantly) an apparent view that we are dealing here with immature, *soi-disant* or *manqué* *Orgelbüchlein* sketches—despite all this, Jacob conveys musicianship. I do not hear the freshness of the young Arnstadt composer's imagination conveyed by this kind of playing; but I do hear a highly developed musicianship that certain early fingerers might usefully study.

The organs too have differences that are most instructive. The Boston organ is fair up to flues 8' and 4', but the reeds and mutations are not easy to like. The part-Silbermann organ at Arlesheim gives Jacob some fine opportunities,

such as the Montre for *Herzliebster Jesu*, the Cromorne in BWV 1094, the canonic coloring in BWV 714, and so on. Musicians studying German theories of *Affekt* could do no better than begin with these pieces, for time and again they achieve their effect only when they have the right *Affekt*, and that is at least partly a question of registration. How far Jacob's technical versatility mirrors that of the young Thuringer we will never know, but for the moment I think one useful way of trying to understand the issues would indeed be to study both of these interpretations.

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