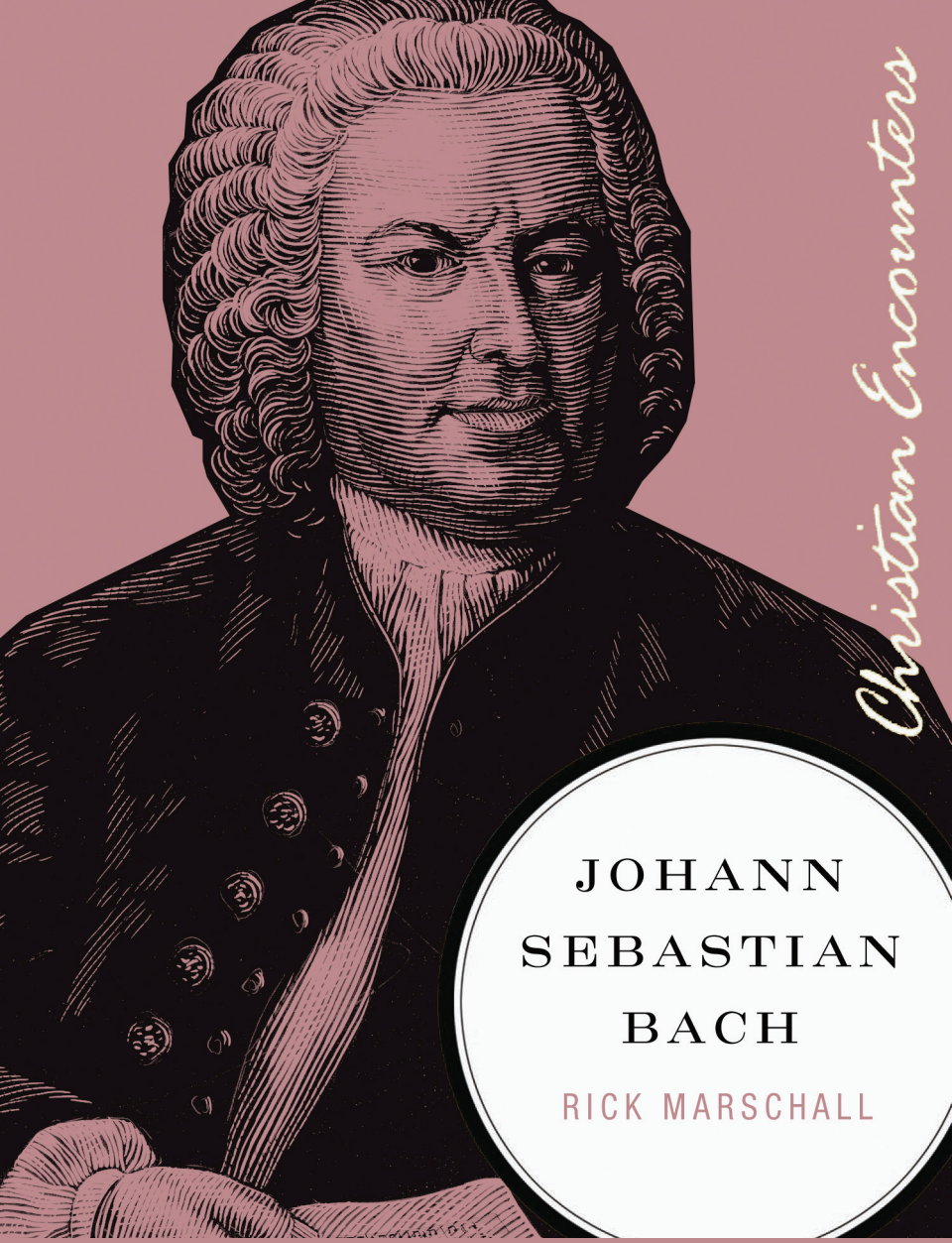

Christian Encounters

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

RICK MARSCHALL

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

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APPENDIX A

THE FAMILY OF JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Many Bachs are significant in musical history, in the life and career of Johann Sebastian, and in this book. The text identifies and delineates them clearly. Bach had so many musical ancestors and cousins, and so many musical children, that the biography of a certain fictional composer "discovered" by the clever satirist—and, in truth, brilliant musicologist—Peter Schickele, is almost plausible. "Johann Sebastian Bach had twenty-odd children," Professor Schickele of the University of Southern North Dakota at Hoople said. "P. D. Q. Bach was the last, and the oddest." The real Bach became the launching pad for many similar *entre-nous* musical jests—not that there's anything wrong with that. For the purpose of this appendix and its usefulness for readers of this book, however, only Johann Sebastian Bach's wives and surviving children are listed here. To cite more would open Pandora's "Bachs."

WIVES AND CHILDREN REFERRED TO IN TEXT:

Bach married his second cousin Maria Barbara Bach (1684–1720) in 1707. Of their seven children, four survived to adulthood:

Catharina Dorothea (1708–1774)
Wilhelm Friedemann (1710–1784)
Carl Philipp Emanuel (1714–1788)
Johann Gottfried Bernhard (1715–1739)

Bach married Anna Magdalena Wülcken (1701–1760) in 1721. They had thirteen children, six of whom survived to adulthood:

Gottfried Heinrich (1724–1763)
Elisabeth Juliana Friederica ("Liesgen") (1726–1781)
Johann Christoph Friedrich, the "Bückeburg" Bach (1732–1795)
Johann Christian, the "London Bach" (1735–1782)
Johanna Carolina (1737–1781)
Regina Susanna (1742–1809)

APPENDIX B:

CHRONOLOGY

RESIDENCES AND EMPLOYMENT OF JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

1685 born in Eisenach, 21 March, in the German region of Thuringia

1695 moves to Ohrdruf to live with elder brother Johann Christoph

1700 moves to Lüneburg, attends St. Michael's School

1703 after brief work in Weimar, appointed organist at New Church in Arnstadt

1707 organist at St. Blasius Church, Mühlhausen

1708 court organist and chief chamber musician, Ducal court of Sachsen-Weimar

1717 *Kapellmeister* at Cöthen

1723 appointed cantor at St. Thomas Church in Leipzig, director of music at Thomasschule and three other Leipzig churches; holds posts until death

1736 appointed honorary court composer to the Elector of Saxony

1747 accepts invitation to perform and improvise at court of Frederick the Great, Potsdam

1750 died in Leipzig, 28 July

APPENDIX C

ANNOTATED GLOSSARY OF MUSICAL TERMS AND FORMS USED BY BACH

Basso Continuo. Simply the "continual bass line," but in Baroque music, much more. As Bach taught—he inherited this method and perfected it—the "ground" or foundation of melodic work can be found in the bass line and built upward. But this is more than achieving a pattern of harmony notes to a bass melody. In Baroque music the notated musical score presents numbers with the bass notes, indicating full harmonies. In this manner the foundation "voice," whether choral, keyboard, organ, or strings, presents a lush, worked-out harmony. Thus all other parts are supported and endless vistas of harmonics are possible, as those parts answer in kind, in harmony, in part, in countermelodies, or—as Bach would do for dramatic emphasis—would hold back their roles when a text's essence could receive focus, for instance when a Passion would relate the death of Jesus.

BWV. The German initials for the catalog numbering of Bach's works, *Bach-Werke-Verzeichnis*.

chamber music. Ensemble music played in a room (French, *chambre*; Italian, *camera*), not necessitating a concert hall. Performance groups today sometimes double or triple the instrumentation and perform, say, the *Brandenburg Concertos* with twenty or more instruments. Yet modest ensembles of six to ten players, including soloists, played many of the concertos of Bach, Vivaldi, and Händel.

chorale. As explained more fully in the text, the chorale has evolved through the centuries in the Catholic and Lutheran churches from unaccompanied choral songs of the liturgy to complex harmonic independent pieces. Sometimes accompanied by instruments, under Bach the chorale bore no constraints of length or structure, perhaps the musical precursor of free verse. Under Bach they assumed and imparted a new function: relying on familiar church music or hymn tunes and lending the worship service a scriptural motif though music.

clavier; clavichord. The clavichord is a keyboard instrument wherein the strings are plucked; therefore it's related to the harpsichord. Today the word *clavier* is most associated with Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, which referred to the tuning of the temperamental instrument, not the mood of the player. Bach likely performed this work on an instrument we know as a harpsichord, yet he owned many variations of keyboard instruments, including at least one of his own invention. He also consulted

with early manufacturers of keyboard instruments that struck their strings with felt-wrapped hammers, enabling dynamic possibilities of soft (piano) and loud (forte) music—hence the name "pianoforte."

concerto. As codified by Italian middle-Baroque composers, particularly Antonio Vivaldi, the concerto (sometimes concerto grosso) is a three-movement piece, generally fast-slow-fast, featuring one or more solo instruments whose play alone, in contrast, or integrated with the full orchestra (*tutti*) provides for dynamic expression. Bach was to write concertos for one to four harpsichords and for other instruments. Händel wrote eighteen concerti grossi for purely instrumental ensembles and notable concertos with organ. Mozart (especially), Haydn, and Beethoven ultimately wrote the definitive formal Classical concertos, a distinguishing characteristic of which was the improvised cadenza offered the solo performer, usually toward the end of each movement.

counterpoint. As explained more fully in the text, the term that encompasses the bass-foundation, the melodic lines above, and the ultimate harmony of seemingly independent "voices" to produce a unified piece of music. The mature form of what developed in Western music as polyphony, literally "many sounds," and whose manifestations were found in Baroque music and most typically in Bach, the fugue, the canon, and so forth.

fugue. Elementary music teachers often explain the fugue with "Row, Row, Row Your Boat," which repeats musical phrases after intervals, as fugues in fact do. But as the repeated phrases are in the same key, it technically is a canon. Fugues become complicated—and wondrous—when new themes, not just a repeated original theme, are introduced. Theoretically, an infinite number of musical phrases can be part of a fugue, but usually four or five suffice. Their employment in upward or downward variations, "mirrored" order, harmonic inversions, and so forth, can threaten cacophony but result in pleasing sounds and awesome harmonies.

harpsichord. A keyboard instrument whose strings are plucked by jacks, quills, or plectrums, producing sounds ranging from soft and lutelike—indeed the genesis of the instrument was the horizontal and mechanical playing of lute- and lyrelike harp constructions—to sharp and piercing. The harpsichord's perceived shortcoming was its lack of dynamic range—keys pressed lightly or boldly would produce the same decibel level—yet such was mitigated by elaborate harpsichords with several keyboards, organlike stops that muffled the strings, and so forth.

liturgy. The form and order of the worship service. Since the Renaissance it has evolved, especially after the Reformation when Catholics and Lutherans alike were sensitive to the needs and responses of worshipers. Under

Bach the liturgy became an invariable foundation upon which were built inventive and inspiring spiritual adornments week after week. In the eyes of some Christians, the liturgy in recent generations has become stultified in ritual and repetition.

Mass. The Catholic worship service from which the Lutheran and Protestant services evolved—perhaps the least contentious differences between the faiths. Luther retained much of the Mass, and Bach was comfortable writing the *B minor Mass* for the Elector of Saxony, in whose court Bach held an honorary position.

motet. The motet can be seen as the church's bridge between the ancient chant and the cantata; longer than chorales or hymns, much shorter than the Mass and not dramatized like Passions. It first appeared in the early thirteenth century, a small ensemble of voices. It was the beginning of the end of "plainsong," which is music without elaborate parts or harmonies; and so the motet marks the advent of polyphony—although, for a couple of centuries, rather crude. Three voices predominated—four-part harmony was not a primary instinct of Western music—and the harmonies frequently were three-five chords or open fifths, very basic. Eventually the form evolved. Counterpoint, a strong bass line, asserted itself, and the motet was incorporated into the Mass and occasionally the Lutheran service, sometimes as a multimovement

introduction, on topic, to the major concert music of the service.

By its reliance on harmony, the motet provided a bridge to the development of counterpoint and figured-bass writing, thence to the fugue. By its obvious reliance on text, it hastened the development of the oratorio and cantata. Interestingly, the most innovative motet composers might have been Michael Bach and Johann Christoph Bach, uncles of Johann Sebastian, who mastered the chorale-motet and developed the cantata form. Their motets were not just beautiful, but beautifully meditative.

The motet never seemed to evolve toward a permanent identity of its own, as other forms tended to serve whatever purpose it might have had. By its evolution, Spitta wrote, "the form of the motet became a very uncertain one, and when . . . the definitions of opera, oratorio, and sacred cantata were established, and the art of organ-playing reached its full development, it almost entirely lost its distinguishing characteristics."

Its final distinguishing characteristic, however, should have earned it a better fate or a longer life. The motet became invariably an *a cappella* work and usually of several movements. Like brief vocal chorales, motets could provide balm to the ears and souls of listeners. Bach's *"Jesu, meine Freude"* ("Jesus, My Joy") is the most lovely of his motets. Anachronism or not, the sound of simple harmonized choruses in extended, beautiful praise is sweet.

oratorio. A genre seldom employed by Bach, the oratorio is best explained as a religious opera without a stage. Drama based on biblical stories is presented employing overtures and instrumental movements, recitatives, arias, solos and choruses, and often a narrator—an orator, providing one theory of its name—or a singing narrator who stands apart from the action. Oratorios sometimes were performed outside the settings of churches. The most famous composer of Baroque oratorios is Händel, who wrote one German, two Italian, and seventeen English-language oratorios, the most famous of which is immortal: the *Messiah*.

Bach wrote three oratorios, all for church holy days: Christmas, Easter, and Ascension Day. The Christmas Oratorio was performed over the six Sundays and feast days; its opening chorus, the sinfonia "*Jauchzet, frohlocket, auf, preiset die Tage*" ("Rejoice, be joyful, come praise the day!") with its brass fanfares and timpani drums, is one of the most rousing movements in all of music.

Passion. The Passion is basically an oratorio with a more dedicated theme—the suffering and death of the Savior—and more drama, action, and even costumes on occasion. Presented during the apogee of the church year, Passions often unfolded over several evenings during Holy Week, specially integrated into the liturgy.

Traditionally, composers were free to be as creative and artistic as possible. They could use a libretto drawn from biblical texts, familiar writings of the church, newly

written words, in any combination. The music—presumably because the Easter story summed up Christ's mission and ministry—was allowed to be drawn from various sources, whether other composers, or the composer's earlier music called "parodies" (not in the sense of humor, but of reworking), or completely fresh music.

Passions were enacted as early as the eighth century, always during Holy Week. Words of the evangelists were chanted, and words of Jesus and other principal players were spoken. In the early sixteenth century, the church in Holland set the entire Passion-week story to music. Luther heard it, approved, and had his friends Walther and Melanchthon publish it, with words in German and Latin.

There are famous Passions of our time. A renowned Passion play is produced in Oberammergau, a small Bavarian town of two thousand inhabitants, half of whom stage and act in the seven-hour re-creation of Holy Week events. The play has been produced every ten years since 1634 when the town, threatened by the bubonic plague, collectively prayed for mercy and vowed to share with the world this portion of the gospel story if they were spared.

In Drumheller, Alberta, Canada, every July the Canadian Badlands Passion Play is presented in a thirty-acre canyon bowl that forms a natural amphitheater.

Many people watched the recent Mel Gibson movie *The Passion of the Christ*.

The first German musical Passions were sweet, dramatic, and moving in their antique structure, the entire productions emoting holiness even when words were not understood. When the Italian opera attracted many German audiences, and since Passions were so close in form to operas, the German presentations, including Bach's, adopted spectacular scope: a full orchestra, large choirs, freer expression. There was another reason for the bling. As operas and musical theaters grew coarser, churches wanted to retain and deliver purity for the masses.

In another story of frenzied crowds excited by a performance of Baroque church music, there were reports that people had to be calmed and turned away from a performance of Händel's *Passion*—text by Brockes—possibly conducted by Bach himself. The performance was criticized in some quarters as vulgar for its graphic depictions of Christ's tortured scourging —a foreshadowing of the criticism of Mel Gibson's movie!

Bach's surviving Passions are the *St. Matthew*, which he considered one of his lifetime's greatest works, and the *St. John*. At least three others have been lost.

We made an earlier reference to Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber's polychoral Masses in the cavernous Salzburg Cathedral. Bach employed the same "surround-sound" structure in the *St. Matthew Passion* and the grand *Magnificat*—stereophony. At St. Thomas Church, certain movements were performed from the east organ loft, the "swallow's nest" opposite the main musician's gallery at

the west end of the church, a double-choir structure "that produced a splendid and festive effect."

The structure of Bach's Passions was strictly traditional; he changed little of the form he inherited. The straight biblical narrative was distributed among soloists (evangelists and various *soliloquentes*, or individual speakers, including Jesus, Peter, Pilate) and choirs (various *turbae* or crowds, including high priests, Roman soldiers, Jews). The Passion's flow was dotted by narration, hymn strophes, and contemplative lyrics, "madrigal pieces" of free verse, mainly delivered as arias. One can begin to appreciate the spectacle that audiences beheld: a combination of church and theater, Greek-style drama and opera, music and voice, costume and acting.

Bach revised the *St. Matthew Passion* several times through the years. His best works were repeated in his churches and performed elsewhere, just as he occasionally performed works of esteemed contemporaries. Of his manuscript scores that survive today, none bears such respect as *St. Matthew*. In 1736, at least, he considered it his most significant work. His autograph score shows loving attention, written in red or brown inks according to the biblical and dramatic libretto sources and employing calligraphy in careful Gothic or Latin letters. It was preserved as an heirloom. It appears that a later accident, perhaps a spill, damaged portions of some pages and Bach lovingly repaired those sections with paste-overs.

This was the same care that the early evangelists, or recipients of their epistles, might have shown to those texts. It is notable that history came to call Bach "The Fifth Evangelist," the accolade bypassing even his spiritual mentor Martin Luther.