Exploring Bach’s B-minor Mass

The B-minor Mass has always represented a fascinating challenge to musical scholarship. Composed over the course of Johann Sebastian Bach’s life, it is considered by many to be the composer’s greatest and most complex work. The fourteen essays assembled in this volume originate from the international symposium ‘Understanding Bach’s B-minor Mass’ at which scholars from eighteen countries gathered to debate the latest topics in the field. In revised and updated form, they comprise a thorough and systematic study of Bach’s *opus ultimum*, including a wide range of discussions relating to the Mass’s historical background and contexts, structure and proportion, sources and editions, and the reception of the work in the late eighteenth century and the nineteenth century. In the light of important new developments in the study of the piece, this collection demonstrates the innovation and rigour for which Bach scholarship has become known.

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Exploring Bach’s B-minor Mass

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and JAN SMACZNY
In Memory of Anne Leahy
Contents

List of illustrations  [page ix]
List of music examples  [xi]
List of tables  [xiii]
Notes on contributors  [xv]
Preface  [xix]
Acknowledgements  [xxiii]
List of abbreviations and conventions  [xxiv]

PART I HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXTS  [1]

1 Past, present and future perspectives on Bach’s B-minor Mass  [3]
CHRISTOPH WOLFF

2 Bach’s Mass: ‘Catholic’ or ‘Lutheran’?  [21]
ROBIN A. LEAVER

3 Bach’s Missa BWV 232 in the context of Catholic Mass settings in Dresden, 1729–1733  [39]
JANICE B. STOCKIGT

4 The role and significance of the polonaise in the ‘Quoniam’ of the B-minor Mass  [54]
SYMON PACZKOWSKI

5 ‘The Great Catholic Mass’: Bach, Count Questenberg and the Musicalische Congregation in Vienna  [84]
MICHAEL MAUL

PART II STRUCTURE AND PROPORTION  [105]

6 Some observations on the formal design of Bach’s B-minor Mass  [107]
ULRICH SIEGEL
viii Contents

7 Chiastic reflection in the B-minor Mass: lament’s paradoxical mirror [125]
   MELVIN P. UNGER

8 Parallel proportions, numerical structures and Harmonie in Bach’s autograph score [142]
   RUTH TATLOW

PART III SOURCES [163]

9 Many problems, various solutions: editing Bach’s B-minor Mass [165]
   UWE WOLF

10 Manuscript score No. 4500 in St Petersburg: a new source of the B-minor Mass [186]
    TATIANA SHABALINA

PART IV RECEPTION [215]

   ULRICH LEISINGER

12 ‘A really correct copy of the Mass?’ Mendelssohn’s score of the B-minor Mass as a document of the Romantics’ view on matters of performance practice and source criticism [244]
   ANSELM HARTINGER

13 The B-minor Mass in nineteenth-century England [267]
   KATHARINE PARDEE

14 Bach’s B-minor Mass: an incarnation in Prague in the 1860s and its consequences [287]
   JAN SMACZNY

General index [298]
Source index [311]
Illustrations

1.1 Bach’s C-clefs in the opening pages of ‘Kyrie’ I and ‘Credo’ in Bach’s autograph score [page 8]
1.2 Bach’s autograph score (P 13) of Sanctus (1724): the opening [16]
1.3 Three structural layers of the ‘Credo’ as reflected in Bach’s scoring in his autograph [18]
4.1 Title page and dedication of Tobias Butz’s Mass Delicta juventutis meæ ne memineris (D-Dl, Mus. 2834-D-1) [59]
4.2 The cover of Bach’s Missa (1733) containing the dedication (D-Dl, Mus. 2405-D-21) [60]
4.3 Decree of 19 November 1736, granting Bach the title of Compositeur bey der Königl. Hoff Capelle (D-Dla, 10026 Geh. Kab. Loc. 907/3, fol. 57) [65]
5.1 Receipt issued to Questenberg for the payment of a membership fee for the Musicalische Congregation in Vienna (1749) (Moravský Zemský Archiv, Brno, MCA, F 460, ‘Spotřební účty videnského dvora (domu) Jana Adama hr. Questenberka, 1701–1752’ [Account books of Count Questenberg], Nos. 9721–52, No. 9769: Jan.–Dec. 1749) [94]
5.2 ‘Catalogo di tutti li Signori Congregati, e Congregate della Congregazione Musicale’ (A-Wst, E 124523) [100]
7.1 The end of ‘Et expecto’ in Bach’s autograph score (p. 150) [128]
7.2 The ‘Duo voces’ in Bach’s autograph score (p. 151) [130]
7.3 The end of ‘Et in unum’ with the beginning of ‘Crucifixus’ in Bach’s autograph score (p. 110) [131]
7.4 The ‘Fulde’ canon (BWV 1077) in Bach’s autograph [135]
10.1 The opening page of ‘Credo’ of the St Petersburg manuscript (St Petersburg State Conservatory, No. 4500, fol. 1r) [188]
10.2 Bars 99–105 of Sanctus (showing bass and basso continuo parts only) in Bach’s autograph score and the St Petersburg manuscript [191]
10.3 Bar 77 of ‘Patrem’ (showing tenor, bass and basso continuo parts only) in Bach’s autograph score [192]
10.4 Bars 69–70 of ‘Et in Spiritum Sanctum’ (showing bass part only) in Bach’s autograph score [193]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>Bar 11 of <em>Sanctus</em> (showing oboe II, oboe III and violin I parts only) in Bach’s autograph score (left) and the St Petersburg manuscript (right) [194]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>Bars 23–5 of ‘Dona nobis pacem’ (showing violin II part only) in Bach’s autograph score [194]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>Bars 10–11 of ‘Et incarnatus’ (showing alto, tenor and bass only) in Bach’s autograph score (left) and in the St Petersburg manuscript (right) [195]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>Bars 14–15 of ‘Dona nobis pacem’ (bass part only) in the St Petersburg manuscript [196]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>Handwriting samples taken from Haydn, <em>Die Jahreszeiten</em>, D-F, Mus. Hs. Opern 264 B (2/1–3) made by the copyist of the St Petersburg manuscript [209]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.10</td>
<td>Handwriting samples of the copyist of the St Petersburg manuscript [209]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.11</td>
<td>The stemma of the sources of the B-minor Mass related to the Frankfurt manuscript [211]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>The beginning of ‘Et in Spiritum Sanctum’ with the change of scoring by Mendelssohn (GB-Ob, Ms. M. Deneke Mendelssohn, c.67, fol. 40r) [251]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>The beginning of ‘Et in terra’ with interpretative and source-critical comments by Mendelssohn (GB-Ob, Ms. M. Deneke Mendelssohn, c.66, fol. 23r) [259]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>‘Crucifixus’ (bars 32–9) with dynamics added by Mendelssohn for his 1841 Leipzig performance (GB-Ob, Ms. M. Deneke Mendelssohn, c.67, fol. 22v) [261]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>Gauntlett’s arrangement of the ‘Gratias’ from the B-minor Mass (London: C. Lonsdale, 1838) [278]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Music examples

4.1 J. S. Bach, B-minor Mass, ‘Quoniam’, bars 1–5 and 12–21: polonaise rhythm is present in the bassoon (bars 2, 4, 12) and continuo (bars 3, 4, 5, 14, 17) [page 71]

4.2 J. A. Hasse, Missa ultima in G minor (1783), chorus ‘Quoniam’ (D-Dl, Mus. 2477-D-48) [74]

4.3 J. D. Heinichen, Missa à 4 voci, ‘Quoniam’, bars 14–25 (transcribed from D-Dl, Mus. 2398-D-11) [77]

4.4 J. D. Zelenka, Missa Charitatis, ‘Quoniam’, bars 20–4 (transcribed from D-B, Am. B. 361, and not from the composer’s manuscript, D-Dl, Mus. 2358-D-23, owing to textual problems) [78]

7.1 J. S. Bach, ‘Fulde’ canon (BWV 1077): realisation (bars 1–4 only) [136]


11.2 W. A. Mozart, Mass in C minor, ‘Domine Deus’, bars 1–13 (string parts only): melodic invention [227]

11.3 W. A. Mozart, Mass in C minor, ‘Credo’, bars 1–5: use of double chorus [228]

11.4 G. M. Monn, Missa in C major, M. 38, ‘Cum Sancto Spiritu’: introduction [234]

11.5 G. von Reutter, Missa St. Caeciliae, ‘Cum Sancto Spiritu’ (vocal parts and string parts only): introduction [234]

11.6 G. von Reutter, Missa St. Caeciliae, ‘Qui tollis’ (excerpts): ground bass [235]

11.7 C. Ditters von Dittersdorf, Missa in C major, Krebs 326, ‘Qui tollis’ (excerpts): ground bass [236]

12.1 J. S. Bach, B-minor Mass, ‘Et resurrexit’ (opening bars), trumpet parts I, II and III: the simplified version by Mendelssohn for the 1841 Leipzig performance (above) compared with Bach’s original version (below) as given in Mendelssohn’s copy (GB-Ob, Ms. M. Deneke Mendelssohn, c.67) [264]
12.2 J. S. Bach, B-minor Mass, *Sanctus* (opening bars), trumpet parts I, II and III: the simplified version by Mendelssohn for the 1841 Leipzig performance (above) compared with Bach’s original (below) as given in Mendelssohn’s copy (GB-Ob, Ms. M. Deneke Mendelssohn, c.67) [264]
Tables

1.1 Chronology of Bach’s B-minor Mass [page 10]
1.2 Keys and scorings of the individual movements of the B-minor Mass [12]
1.3 Bach’s revisions in *Symbolum Nicenum* [13]
1.4 Sanctus and Agnus Dei [13]
3.1 Catalogue entries of the sacred works that possibly belonged to Maria Josepha, D-Dl, Bibl. Arch. III Hb 787 [43]
3.2 The Masses composed or reworked by Zelenka in 1729–1733 [45]
3.3 Original sets of parts for selected sacred works performed in Dresden [50]
6.1 The number of bars and their disposition in the *Kyrie* [113]
6.2 The number of bars and their disposition in the *Missa* [114]
6.3 The number of bars and their disposition in the *Symbolum Nicenum* (earlier version) [116]
6.4 The number of bars and their disposition in the *Symbolum Nicenum* (later version) [117]
6.5 The key structure in the *Symbolum Nicenum* (earlier version) [118]
6.6 The key structure in the *Symbolum Nicenum* (later version) [120]
6.7 The number of bars and their disposition in the *Sanctus* and the remainder of the Mass [121]
6.8 Synoptic disposition of the B-minor Mass [123]
8.1 Parallel proportions in the 1733 *Missa: stile antico* counted at the breve [149]
8.2 Parallel proportions in the 1733 *Missa: stile antico* counted at the semibreve, and time signature as non-barline (marked TS) [150]
8.3 Double 1:1 proportions opening both Part II, *Symbolum Nicenum*, and Part I, *Missa* [152]
8.4 Parallel proportions in 1400 bars ‘Credo’–‘Dona nobis pacem’ before the addition of 53 bars to the *Symbolum Nicenum* [153]
8.5 300-bar block in score of Part IV [154]
8.6 The double 2:1 proportion ‘Sanctus’–‘Dona nobis pacem’ [155]
List of tables

8.7 Quadruple 1:1 proportion with additional four-bar introduction to the ‘Crucifixus’, before Bach added the ‘Et incarnatus’ [157]
8.8 Parallel plan 1 with 2345 bars: stile antico counted at the breve [158]
8.9 Parallel plan 2 with 2640 bars: stile antico at the semibreve and TS feature [160]
10.1 Select list of errors and variants found in the St Petersburg, Frankfurt, Paris and Halle manuscripts [198]
10.2 Four layers of corrections of the Frankfurt manuscript as reflected in the St Petersburg, Paris and Halle manuscripts [201]
11.1 Disposition of the Gloria in Bach’s B-minor Mass and Mozart’s Mass in C minor [231]
11.2 Disposition of the Gloria in Gassmann’s Missa St. Caeciliae and Haydn’s Missa Cellensis [237]
13.1 Chronology of the St Matthew Passion and B-minor Mass in nineteenth-century England [268]
14.1 Compositions by J. S. Bach performed in Prague between September 1857 and the end of 1865 [289]
14.2 Other pre-Classical composers featured in concert life in Prague between September 1857 and the end of 1865 [292]
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Preface

In November 2007 Queen’s University Belfast hosted the international symposium ‘Understanding Bach’s B-minor Mass’, which attracted over seventy Bach scholars from eighteen countries. The present volume is one of the early fruits of this event. The choice of the word ‘exploring’ (instead of ‘understanding’) for the title seemed a genuine and more appropriate response to the character of the symposium: there was an overwhelming feeling that we had travelled a long way from where we were as little as five years before. We came to realise that there is still much to be researched before we can begin to ‘understand’ the work. As Hans-Joachim Schulze predicted in 1985, the B-minor Mass indeed continues to be the ‘perpetual touchstone’ for Bach research.

The symposium had its roots in a two-day event that Yo Tomita organised at Queen’s University in November 2004, with Joshua Rifkin and Anne Leahy as guests. However, the concrete discussion concerning hosting a more major event did not actually begin until May 2006, when Leahy declared at a dinner during the American Bach Society’s biennial meeting in Leipzig that it was time to have ‘another Irish Bach conference’. Together with Robin A. Leaver, Leahy and Tomita formulated a detailed plan and began to consult with many colleagues to solicit their ideas. We knew that it was exactly fifty years since Friedrich Smend had published the Kritischer Bericht of the Mass in the Neue Bach-Ausgabe, a work that not only offered a wealth of new information about the origin and transmission of the Mass but also posed many important questions for later scholars to address. It took only a few years for some of Smend’s evidence and conclusions to be seriously challenged by Georg von Dadelsen. In the five decades that followed, many new issues concerning the composition and reception of the

1 For a detailed review of the event, see Eighteenth-Century Music, 5/2 (September 2008), 271–3.
4 The edition was published in 1954, but the accompanying KB did not appear until 1956.
5 Dadelsen C.
Mass have been raised and often intensely debated by scholars. In the last two decades, several noteworthy new editions have also appeared to replace Friedrich Smend’s publication: Christoph Wolff (C. F. Peters, 1997) and Uwe Wolf (the ‘1733 Missa’ as well as several early sources of the B-minor Mass as separate works as NBA II/1a, Bärenreiter, 2005).

Most crucial with regard to the timing of Leahy’s suggestion concerning the symposium was the imminent appearance of Joshua Rifkin’s long-awaited new edition of the Mass, published by Breitkopf & Härtel (it was in fact published in late November 2006). In a lecture given at Queen’s University Belfast in November 2004 entitled ‘Whose Mass in B minor? Text, Performance, and Identity’, Rifkin aptly outlined the significance of his recent work, spelling out in detail how many of the revised readings in Bach’s autograph score were in fact the work of his second son, Carl Philipp Emanuel, who inherited the score and performed the work. Rifkin’s colossal efforts in distinguishing the differences between the handwritings of father and son(s), in order to attempt to decipher near-impossible readings in Bach’s autograph score and to reconstruct Bach’s final version of the B-minor Mass as presented in his autograph score of 1748–9, was a very significant achievement, as Uwe Wolf acknowledges here in his chapter. Besides that, there was a widespread feeling among scholars that good progress was being made in many other areas of research concerning the wider historical context of the B-minor Mass, such as the political influence of the Saxon electors and that of the German Enlightenment, the significance of Polish style in the works of Bach and his contemporaries, the musical style of the ‘Crucifixus’ as examined from the perspective of a

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6 As Peter Wollny has recently argued, there is also evidence of interventions by Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach in the autograph score, which suggest that the B-minor Mass was being considered for dissemination before December 1749. See Wollny A.,


broader historical context, the socio-historical background of Leipzig musicians and Bach’s relationship with the musicians of Dresden as seen through the study of the life and work of Zelenka, to name only five. Likewise, Bach studies in the last decade have seen a great increase of interest in the reception of Bach’s works and how this influenced later generations, particularly with regard to ways of appreciating and engaging with the music. Recognising the cross-currents of Bach scholarship, which sometimes seem to be proceeding in opposite directions, and also the backlog of unanswered questions, the triumvirate came to the conclusion that the time was right for scholars to meet and discuss such issues in a holistic and systematic manner. The hope was that such a gathering of leading authorities would lead to a better understanding of a work that with good reason has frequently been claimed to be the greatest musical work of all time. In pursuit of this goal, Leahy, Leaver and Tomita planned the symposium to be held at Queen’s University Belfast, with the generous assistance of colleagues, especially Jan Smaczny.

During the preparation stage of the symposium, several major developments occurred. Early in 2007, there was exciting news about a new high-quality colour facsimile edition of Bach’s autograph score of the B-minor Mass; it appeared in May from Bärenreiter. One reviewer commented that it is ‘a model for the presentation of musical sources, both in appearance and in documentation’, and that ‘because of their extraordinary quality, Rifkin’s edition and Wolff’s facsimile will serve as foundational tools’. Back in March 2007, we were informed that Michael Maul would examine the archival material of church music at the courts of Count Franz Anton von Sporck at Kuks and Count Johann Adam von Questenberg at Jaroměřice (both today in the Czech Republic), with a view to finding out more about the relationships between Bach and the two Catholic aristocrats,

13 D. Boomhower, review of critical editions and facsimile, Notes, 65/2 (December 2008), 385–9, at 386.
14 Ibid., p. 389.
particularly in relation to the genesis and early reception of the B-minor Mass. Also in March 2007, it emerged that Uwe Wolf was appointed to produce a revised edition of the B-minor Mass for the NBA, at the time when many of us were still digesting the significance of Rifkin’s new edition, which had appeared only four months earlier. Unlike Rifkin, who conducted his research by conventional means, Wolf was to use high-tech equipment to conduct micro X-ray fluorescence analysis of Bach’s autograph score of the B-minor Mass. No one knew at the time of the planning of the symposium that research in this area would progress at such speed and in such magnitude.

The symposium was held from Friday 2 to Sunday 4 November 2007. During the three-day meeting, the delegates heard twenty-four papers presented by some of today’s most distinguished Bach scholars on wide-ranging themes, including the historical background of the Mass, its composition and meaning, its theological background, its sources and editions, performance issues and the reception history of the Mass in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The fourteen papers assembled here were chosen primarily in order to create a coherent volume. In revised and updated form, these chapters demonstrate the depth and rigour for which Bach scholarship has been known.

There were many obstacles to overcome during the preparations for this project, but none was greater or more devastating than the loss of our colleague Anne Leahy, who had fallen seriously ill at the beginning of 2007 and lost her brave battle only a month before the symposium. It was her vision and passion that provided the momentum for us to guide the course of this project, and we wish to dedicate this book to her memory.

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Abbreviations and conventions

Voice types and instruments
A  alto
B  bass
bc  basso continuo
bsn  bassoon
cr  corno da caccia
fl  flute
ob  oboe
org  organ
S  soprano
T  tenor
ti  timpani
tr  trumpet
va  viola
vc  violoncello
vn  violin
vne  violone

Library sigla
A-GÖ  Benediktinerabtei, Musikarchiv, Stift Göttweig, Austria
A-Wgm  Archiv, Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien, Vienna, Austria
A-Wn  Musiksammlung, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, Austria
A-Wsa  Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv, Vienna, Austria
A-Wst  Wienbibliothek im Rathaus, Vienna, Austria
CH-Zz  Musikabteilung, Zentralbibliothek, Zurich, Switzerland
CZ-Pak  Archiv Pražského Hradu, Knihovna Metropolitní Kapituly, Hudební Sbírka Katedrály Svatého Víta – Hudební sbírka Kaple sv. Kříže Katedrály, Prague, Czech Republic
CZ-Pnm  Národní Muzeum, České Muzeum Hudby, Hudebně-Historické Oddělení, Prague, Czech Republic
Abbreviations and conventions

D-B Musikabteilung, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, Germany
D-Dl Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Dresden, Germany
D-Dla Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Dresden, Germany
D-F Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg, Frankfurt am Main, Germany
D-GOl Forschungs- und Landesbibliothek, Gotha, Germany
GB-Cu University Library, Cambridge, UK
GB-Lbl The British Library, London, UK
GB-Ob Bodleian Library, Oxford, UK

Manuscript sources of the B-minor Mass

Autograph score D-B, Mus. ms. Bach P 180. For colour facsimile, see Wolff 2007; also available in high-resolution scans in Bach Digital (www.bach-digital.de)


P, St The Bach sources in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (D-B) with shelfmarks prefixed ‘Mus. mus. Bach P’ and ‘Mus. mus. Bach St’ are abbreviated throughout the volume as P (Partitur = score) and St (Stimmen = parts) respectively

Books, journals, articles and editions

AMZ Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung [1st series] (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1798–1848)
Bach BACH: Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute Baldwin-Wallace College
BDok I W. Neumann and H.-J. Schulze (eds.), Schriftstücke von der Hand Johann Sebastian Bachs, Bach-Dokumente, I (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik; Kassel)
Abbreviations and conventions

Bärenreiter, 1963); references to individual documents in the form BDok I/1

BDok II W. Neumann and H.-J. Schulze (eds.), Fremdschriftliche und gedruckte Dokumente zur Lebensgeschichte Johann Sebastian Bachs 1685–1750, Bach-Dokumente, II (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik; Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1969); references to individual documents in the form BDok II/1

BDok III H.-J. Schulze (ed.), Dokumente zum Nachwirken Johann Sebastian Bachs 1750–1800, Bach-Dokumente, III (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik; Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1972); references to individual documents in the form BDok III/1


BDok VI A. Glöckner, A. Hartinger and K. Lehmann (eds.), Ausgewählte Dokumente zum Nachwirken Johann Sebastian Bachs 1801–1850, Bach-Dokumente, VI (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2007); references to individual documents in the form BDok VI/A 1


BJ Bach-Jahrbuch (1904–)

Butt A J. Butt, Bach: Mass in B minor (Cambridge University Press, 1991)


Abbreviations and conventions xxvii


Dadelsen A G. von Dadelsen, Bemerkungen zur Handschrift Johann Sebastian Bachs, seiner Familie und seines Kreises, Tübingen Bach-Studien, 1 (Trossingen: Hohner Verlag, 1957)

Dadelsen B G. von Dadelsen, Beiträge zur Chronologie der Werke Johann Sebastian Bachs, Tübingen Bach-Studien, 4–5 (Trossingen: Hohner Verlag, 1958)


HStCal Königlich-Polnischer und Churfürstlich-Sächsischer Hof- und Staats-Calender (Leipzig, [from 1733 Hof-] und Staats-Calender, 1728–, except 1730, 1734, 1758–64)


NBA [Neue Bach-Ausgabe] Johann Sebastian Bach: Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1954–2008); references to series and vol. in the form I/1

NBA KB Kritischer Bericht (critical report) of NBA

Abbreviations and conventions

NBR  H. T. David and A. Mendel (eds.), The New Bach Reader: A Life of Johann Sebastian Bach in Letters and Documents, rev. and enlarged C. Wolff (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998); references to individual documents in the form NBR/1


Wolff A  C. Wolff, Der stile antico in der Musik Johann Sebastian Bachs: Studien zu Bachs Spätwerk, Beilage zum Archiv für Musikwissenschaft, 6 (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1968)


Abbreviations and conventions

Wollny A  
P. Wollny, 'Beobachtungen am Autograph der h-Moll-Messe', BJ, 95 (2009), 135–51

Wollny B  

ZWV  
W. Reich, Jan Dismas Zelenka: Thematischsystematisches Verzeichnis der musikalischen Werke (ZWV) (Dresden: Sächsische Landesbibliothek, 1985)

Conventions used in references to sections and movements

Bach’s own divisions of the Mass are shown in italic, and the names of individual movements are in roman type and single quotation marks in text (and in roman type only, without quotation marks, in parentheses and tables unless more than one movement is listed). For a full list of movements, see Table 1.1 on p. 10.