

BWV 1128: A recently discovered Bach organ work

Joel H. Kuznik

Latest Bach manuscript discovery: *Wo Gott der Herr nicht bei uns hält*, BWV 1128

The discovery of a Bach manuscript always raises curiosity and excites expectant interest. This latest work, an organ chorale fantasia just discovered in March, is a reminder that new revelations can come at any time from any source.

Bach's copy of the Calov Bible was found in an attic in Frankenmuth, Michigan in 1934, but forgotten until after WWII, in 1962. More recently in 1999, after a 20-year detective hunt worthy of a spy mystery and with a tip from an East German librarian, Christian Wolff tracked down C.P.E. Bach's estate, with 5,100 musical manuscripts, to Kiev. Originally in the Berlin State Library, the Russian army absconded with this treasure trove of manuscripts after the war. Included were works by Johann Sebastian, among which were his last work, a motet he apparently prepared for his own funeral.

In 2004 an aria by Bach was found in Weimar in a box of birthday cards among holdings of the Anna Amalia Library, just months before it was destroyed by fire. Two years later in 2006 from the same Weimar library, researchers also found Bach's oldest manuscripts in his own hand: organ works by Buxtehude and Reinken he copied at the age of fifteen. Most recently in March of 2008, a newly discovered organ work was found in an estate sale in Leipzig, in a sense, right under the nose of the musicians at St. Thomas!

This is a double review. The first discusses the organ score and reveals a fascinating history of teacher-student transmission, estate sales, alert and not-so-alert librarians, savvy editors, guesswork and

unanswered questions. Much like studies in genealogy, one can trace documented history back only so far and, in this case, only to the mid-nineteenth century, 100 years after Bach. The second review on the CD, featuring both the organ fantasia and the cantata based on the same chorale, was released on June 13, 2008 at the opening concert of the Leipzig Bachfest and shares Ullrich Böhme's experience of studying and preparing a first performance of a Bach work. How many have had that opportunity!

Obviously this is not the end of the story. No doubt surprises and discoveries still await detection by sharp-sighted scholars and through pure serendipity.

Bach, Johann Sebastian, *Choralfantasie für Orgel [2 Manuale und Pedal] über "Wo Gott der Herr nicht bei uns hält," BWV 1128, First Edition, edited by Stephan Blaut and Mi-*



chael Pacholke with a foreword by Hans-Joachim Schulze. 2008, Ortus Musikverlag, Kassel, 24 pp., €13.50; <www.ortus-musikverlag.de/>.

Contents

Prologue by Schulze, musicologist and former director of the Bach-Archiv Leipzig. Critical report on Source A (Halle, Martin Luther University, University-State Library of Sachsen-Anhalt, with signature) and Source B (Leipzig, Bach-Archiv, no signature) with score variants noted. Chorale melody from Wittenberg (1533, perhaps 1529) and eight-verse text by Justus Jonas (1493–1555) based on Psalm 124. Facsimiles of cover page and first page of musical score. Critical edition, based on Source A: 85 bars, pp. 1–9.

History

How is it that an organ work by Bach was just discovered and authenticated March 15, 2008 after it had passed through so many hands, including collectors, musicians, editors and auction houses?

According to Schulze's foreword, this is what is known to date. The first public record of this chorale fantasia is 1845, almost 100 years after Bach's death, listed among organ pieces by "Sebastian Bach" in the estate auction for Johann Nicolaus Julius Kötschau (1788–1845), once organist at St. Mary's in Halle/Salle. According to public record, he acquired the pieces in an 1814 auction along with the "Clavier-Büchlein of Wilhelm Friedemann" (1720), Bach's son and once an organist in Halle, who had passed the scores on to his distant relative and student Johann Christian (1743–1814), known as the "Clavier-Bach." Kötschau, who apparently was reluctant to share his prize collection, eventually relented, first loaning it to Mendelssohn (1840) and then Leipzig publishers C. F. Peters (1843). However, there is no evidence that anyone recognized the significance of what they saw.

In the 1845 auction of Kötschau's estate, the manuscript, along with other Bach works, was acquired by Friedrich August Gotthold (1778–1858), a former member of the Sing-Akademie Berlin and then director of the Collegium in Königsberg, East Prussia. In 1852, in order to preserve his collection, he donated it to the Königsberg Library, but it only drew attention 25 years later when Joseph Müller, in spite of opposition from superiors, prepared a catalogue, which on p. 93 lists "24 books of organ compositions by J. S. Bach," of which fascicle No. 5 lists "Fantasia Sopra il Corale 'Wo Gott der Herr nicht bey uns hält' pro Organo à 2 Clav. e Pedale."

This got the attention of Wilhelm Rust (1822–1892), who had it sent on a library loan to Berlin, where he copied it. This transcription of September 8, 1877 has become "Source A" of this edition, and it is unknown whether Rust, as editor of 26 volumes of the 46-volume *Bach-Gesamtausgabe*, intended to include it.

He resigned over conflicts, particularly with Philipp Spitta, but got even in 1878, in a sense, by sharing the composition with Spitta's rival Carl Hermann Bittner, whose Vol. IV of his second edition of "J. S. Bach" (Dresden 1880 / Berlin 1881) includes "141. Wo Gott der Herr nicht bey uns hält. Fantasia sopra il Chorale G-moll. (Königsberger Bibliothek.)" For whatever reason the chorale fantasia was not included in the *Gesamtausgabe*, so Wolfgang Schmieder in his *Bach-Werke-Verzeichnis* (Leipzig 1950) put a fragment of it in an appendix (BWV Anh. II 71).

After Rust's death in 1892, a large part of his collection went to his student, Erich Prieger (1849–1913), who wrote an extensive essay in 1885 on "Wilhelm Rust and His Bach Edition." Prieger's collection in turn was put up for auction after WW I in three sections, one of which went in 1924 to the Cologne book dealer M. Lempertz and refers to many copies of "Bachiana" from the 18th and 19th centuries, including in Lot No. 157 with Rust's collection of manuscripts.

In summary, the transmission was from Wilhelm Friedemann to Johann Christian to Kötschau, and then from Gotthold to the Königsberg Library to Rust to Prieger, and ultimately from Cologne to . . .

Discovery

When on March 15, 2008 the Leipzig auction firm of Johannes Wend offered Lot No. 153 with "manuscripts from the estate of Wilhelm Rust. Mostly compositions of his own or arrangements of works by Bach . . ." no one could have anticipated that this included parts of Prieger's collection and the chorale fantasia BWV Anh. II 71. The Rust items were acquired by the University-State Museum of Halle/Salle, and finally due to the fastidious work of two editors, Stephan Blaut and Michael Pacholke of Halle University, the chorale fantasia was authenticated and has become BWV 1128!

This edition is based on two 19th-century manuscripts: "Source A" by Rust and "Source B," a copy made by Ernst Naumann sometime after 1890 in the collection of the Bach-Archiv Leipzig. Researchers, according to Schulze, are still hopeful that Kötschau's copy survived WW II and is still to be found, perhaps in a Russian library.

On June 13, 2008, Ullrich Böhme, organist, St. Thomas, played the first Leipzig performance of BWV 1128 at the opening concert of the Bachfest, which included Bach's Cantata 178 on the same chorale, sung by the St. Thomas Choir. The same day a CD by Rondeau Production with both compositions and works by Rust was released. The score by Ortus was published on June 10, showing how rapidly new works can be distributed worldwide.

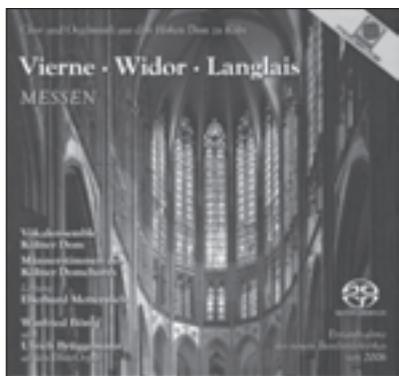
The chorale still exists in German hymnals, but apparently has not survived in American Lutheran usage. The work, a large-scale fantasia believed to date from 1705–1710, is of moderate difficulty in four contrapuntal voices scored for Rückpositiv, Oberwerk and Pedal. After an introductory section, the ornamented chorale appears in the R.H. beginning with bar 12, proceeding verse by verse with interludes, chromaticism and echo sections. It concludes with a coda in a flurry typical of *stylus phantasticus*, all of which should make this "new work" very exciting indeed for Bach fans.

Bach, Johann Sebastian, *Wo Gott der Herr nicht bei uns hält. The Newly Discovered Organ Work: Choralefantasia BWV 1128. Organ and choral works by Ammerbach, J. S. Bach, Rust, and Schein. Ullrich Böhme, organist, on the Bach Organ at Leipzig's St. Thomas Church. St. Thomas Choir with the Gewandhaus Orchestra; Georg Christoph*

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- 4' Gedackt
- 3' Nasat
- 2' Octave
- Sesquialtera II
- Mixtur IV
- Cimbel II
- 16' Fagott

RÜCKPOSITIV

- 8' Gedackt
- 8' Quintatön
- 4' Principal
- 4' Salicional
- 2' Octave
- 2' Spitzflöte
- Sesq. II
- 1½' Quintflöte
- Cimbel III

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- 4' Flöte
- 3' Quinte
- 2' Principal
- 1½' Terz
- Mixtur III
- 8' Schalmey

PEDAL C, D-d1

- 32' Untersatz
- 16' Principal
- 16' Subbass
- 8' Octave
- 4' Octave
- 4' Rohrflöte
- Mixtur IV
- 16' Posaune
- 8' Trompete
- 2' Cornet

The disposition of the organ was designed by Johann Sebastian Bach during his tenure at Divi Blasii ("the divine Blaise") Church in 1707-1708, and built by Johann Friedrich Wender of Mühlhausen. The Wender organ completed in 1709 was replaced in the 19th century with an organ that reflected contemporary tastes. However, by 1957 a new organ was necessary, and through the influence of the cantor at the time, a student of Albert Schweitzer, it was decided to use Bach's original design for an organ to be built by the Schuke firm of Potsdam. <<http://www.innenstadtgemeinde-mhl.de/html/orgel.html>>

Billert, cantor and conductor. 2008, Rondeau Production ROP6023, 50 minutes, €15.95; brochure 39 pp.; <<http://www.rondeau.de/>>.

Imagine being the organist of St. Thomas Church in Leipzig, picking up the newspaper on March 16, 2008 and reading the headline, "Undiscovered Organ Work by Johann Sebastian Bach Found in Halle." So Ullrich Böhme begins his very personal essay, "From Mühlhausen to St. Thomas in Leipzig" (brochure, pp. 6-7). He was further intrigued when he learned the work had been found among scores belonging to a predecessor at St. Thomas, Wilhelm Rust (organist, then cantor 1878-1892), and purchased for 2,500 euros by two scholars from nearby University of Halle. The paper claimed they "snatched away a true sensation from Leipzig," when in fact the chorale had a close connection to Halle. The melody of the chorale had been written by Justus Jonas, a friend of Luther and the reformer of Halle serving as pastor of St. Mary's.

The Bach-Archiv did not have a copy of the piece, but by April 28 Böhme received the score from the publisher, Ortus. He spent the next day at home studying and practicing, and then on evening of April 30 he played the work on the Bach Organ at St. Thomas, experimenting with tempos and registrations. It is probable that Bach played this piece himself, but he also may have given it to one of his sons or students to play on July 30, 1724 as a prelude to the Cantata BWV 178 on the same chorale for the eighth Sunday after Trinity. Böhme believes this is confirmed because in Bach's time the choir and orchestra performed in the lower "Kammerton," whereas the organs at St. Thomas were tuned a step higher in "Chorton," so the pitches g and a-minor match.

The work, a chorale fantasia, reflects influence of the North German compos-

ers Buxtehude, Reinken, and Bruhns. Three other examples of this genre by Bach are heard on the CD: the familiar *Ein feste Burg* (BWV 720), *Christ lag in Todesbanden* (BWV 718), and *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern* (BWV 739).

There is only one organ that Bach played (including those in Lübeck and Hanover) for which BWV 1128 could have been written because of the requirements for a Rückpositiv, Oberwerk, Pedal and the extent of the manual ranges. That is the Wender organ at St. Blasius in Mühlhausen, where Bach served between 1707 and 1708. The original organ has not survived, but a copy with the same specification was built in the late 1950s.

Additional compositions on the chorale, all by former St. Thomas organists or cantors, are a *Tabulatur* by Ammerbach (organist, 1550-1597); duet by St. Thomas Choir Boys from *Opella nova* by Johann Schein (cantor, 1616-1630); and Cantata BWV 178 by J. S. Bach (cantor, 1723-1750). Also included are two pieces by Wilhelm Rust (organist, 1878-80 and cantor, 1880-1892): *Motet for Two Four-Voiced Choirs*, op. 40, on "Aus der Tiefe ruf ich, Herr, zu dir" and an organ fantasia, op. 40/3 on "Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend."

The handsome brochure is replete with photos and information in addition to Böhme's personal account: fascinating program notes by Martin Petzoldt

(Head of the Neue Bachgesellschaft and Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Leipzig); cantata text for BWV 178; biographies for Böhme, Billert, Susanne Krumbiegel (alto), Martin Petzoldt (tenor), and Mathias Weichert (bass); background on the St. Thomas Choir and Gewandhaus Orchestra; and finally the specification and history of the 2000 Bach Organ by Gerald Woehl.

What is eminently apparent in these compositions and performances is a devotional consciousness of the text and the earnest intent to reflect its meaning. The performers are all steeped in the Bach milieu and tradition, performing Bach week after week, year after year in worship and concert. Böhme's playing is equally elegant and eloquent, ever confident, yet always sensitive to the chorale text, realizing the Lutheran approach, which is never performance for its own sake, but music as a servant of theology and worship. While this CD largely features organ music and Böhme's extraordinary playing, the other performers—St. Thomas Choir and Gewandhaus Orchestra under Cantor Georg Christoph Billert—are, as expected, exceptional. This CD and its brochure should certainly pique the interest, as Bach would say, of both "Kenner und Liebhaber" (professionals and music lovers). ■

During his career Joel Kuznik has served as a college organist and professor, a church

musician, a pastor, and as a business executive on Fifth Avenue, Wall Street, and at MetLife. After several years of retirement from business, he resumed writing for professional journals, something he had done since his college days. After attending the Bachfest 2003 in Leipzig, he again began writing articles and reviews. With over 60 pieces in print ranging from reviews of concerts and festivals, travelogues, books on church music, concert hall organs, CDs and DVDs, he was recognized and named to the Music Critics Association of North America (MCANA) in May 2005. He is also a member of the American Bach Society and serves on the board of the Bach Vespers at Holy Trinity in New York City, where he has lived for 32 years.

His organ teachers were Austin C. Lovelace, Frederick Swann, Ronald Arnatt, David Craighead, Jean Langlais, Marie-Madeleine Duruflé-Chevalier, and Anton Heiller. As a member of the AGO, he has served as dean of the Ft. Wayne chapter, on the executive board of the New York City chapter, and on the national financial board. He holds a BA summa cum laude from Concordia Sr. College (formerly at Ft. Wayne), a Min.Div and STM from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and a MM from Eastman School of Music.

Thanks to Ullrich Böhme, Organist, St. Thomas Church, Leipzig, who provided invaluable information, including contacts for getting the score and the CD within ten days of its first performance in Leipzig on June 13 and providing the specification of the Wender organ in Mühlhausen.

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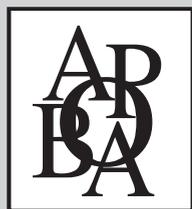
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