

**Passion composition and composers  
of Passion music associated with the  
Court of Anhalt-Zerbst**

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# **Abstract**

## **Passion composition and composers of Passion music associated with the Court of Anhalt-Zerbst**

The dissertation provides a critical study of the five surviving Passion-works associated with the Kapellmeisters of the court of Zerbst within the context of the unique tradition of Passiontide oratorio performances in this centre between 1720 and 1767. To provide a necessary context to the principal topic, the dissertation commences with a survey of the 18th-century oratorio Passion giving a discussion of the centres that supported performances of liturgical Passions, their repertoire and how the works concerned reflected local liturgical requirements. Addressing in turn texts, singing characters, allocation of vocal soloists, instrumentation, musical structures and style, the first chapter examines the development of the form and the conventions of the period, highlighting departures from accepted norms. The chapter ends with two case studies (Telemann's 1744 St Luke Passion and Homilius's St Mark Passion), to provide contrasting examples of mid-century works.

Chapter 2 surveys the development of the Zerbst Hofkapelle in the 18th century: the players and the repertoire. Chapter 3 provides biographies of the three full-time Kapellmeisters (Johann Baptiste Kuch, Johann Friedrich Fasch and Johann Georg Röllig) together with a greatly extended work-list for Röllig.

### *Abstract*

Chapter 4 discusses the evidence provided by the scores and surviving records of services in the Zerbst Schloßkirche from which it is possible to build up a picture of the context of the Passion performances in the Zerbst liturgy and the contents of the Passiontide services. It has also been possible to make an assessment of the number of works that were composed for this centre in the 18th century.

Chapter 5 provides a survey of the principal sources of hymns in the Court (the various *Zerbstisches Gesangbücher* and *Cantional*) and discusses the relationships of the surviving works with these two sources. The remaining chapters each deal with one of the surviving works: Fasch's *Mich vom Stricke meiner Sünden*, Röllig's St Matthew Passion, the anonymous four-Part St Luke and seven-Part St John Passions and Röllig's St Mark Passion (*Die betrübe und getröstete Geistliche Sulamith*). In the light of the evidence presented, the concluding chapter provides tentative suggestions regarding the authorship of the anonymous works.

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## Library sigla and abbreviations

### Sigla of libraries and collections referred to in the dissertation

#### Austria

<i>A-Wgm</i>	Vienna	- Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde
<i>A-Wn</i>	Vienna	- Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Musiksammlung

#### Germany

<i>D-Au</i>	Augsburg	- Universitätsbibliothek
<i>D-Bd s</i>	Berlin	- Deutsches Staatsbibliothek
<i>D-CR</i>	Crimmitschau	- Stadtkirche St Laurentius
<i>D-Gl</i>	Gotha	- Forschungs- und Landesbibliothek
<i>D-HAmi</i>	Halle	- Institut für Musikwissenschaft der Martin-Luther-Universität
<i>D-Knu</i>	Köln	- Universitäts- und Stadtbibliothek
<i>D-LEm</i>	Leipzig	- Musikbibliothek der Stadt
<i>D-LEt</i>	Leipzig	- Thomasschule
<i>D-LEu</i>	Leipzig	- Universitätsbibliothek
<i>D-MAkon</i>	Magdeburg	- Bibliothek, Evangelisches Konsistorium der Kirchenprovinz Sachsen
<i>D-ORB</i>	Oranienbaum	- Landesarchiv-Historisches Staatsarchiv
<i>D-RH</i>	Rheda	- Fürst zu Bentheim-Tecklenburgische
<i>D-ROu</i>	Rostock	- Universitätsbibliothek
<i>D-SWl</i>	Schwerin	- Landesbibliothek Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Musikabteilung

**Denmark**

<i>DK-A</i>	Århus	- Statsbiblioteket
<i>DK-Kk</i>	Copenhagen	- Det Kongelige Bibliotek

**Sweden**

<i>S-L</i>	Lund	- Universitetsbiblioteket
<i>S-Sk</i>	Stockholm	- Kungligabiblioteket
<i>S-Skma</i>	Stockholm	- Kungliga Musikaliska Akademiens Bibliotek
<i>S-Uu</i>	Uppsala	- Universitetsbiblioteket

**UK**

<i>GB-Lbm</i>	London	- British library
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**USA**

<i>US-Cu</i>	Chicago	- University Library
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**Abbreviations used in the course of the dissertation**

<i>Grove 6</i>	-	<i>New Grove Dictionary of Music</i> (1980 edition)
<i>New Grove</i>	=	<i>New Grove Dictionary of Music</i> (forthcoming new edition)
<i>MGG</i>	-	<i>Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart</i>

In the main, abbreviations of names of voices and instruments follows *New Grove*:

vocal parts:

S, A, T, B = solo vocal parts

SATB = choral vocal parts

wind instruments:

rec = recorder; fl = flute; ob = oboe; bn = bassoon; hn = horn  
vn = violin; va = viola; vc = cello; vle = violone; org = organ

to this list is added:

picc = flauto piccolo (sopranino recorder)

fl d'a = flauto d'amore

ob d'a = oboe d'amore

gamba = viola da gamba

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## Foreword

In view of the wealth of primary material on the performances of Passions in the Court of Anhalt-Zerbst, the number of surviving works and the uniqueness of the performing tradition, it is surprising that no extended account of this subject has appeared. Prior to this study, the published material dealing with the cycle of performances, the two surviving oratorio Passion sources in Oranienbaum, the Passion oratorio *Passio Jesu Christi: Mich vom Stricke meiner Sünden* by Johann Friedrich Fasch and the Johann Georg Röllig *St Matthew Passion*, amounts to less than a page of text in total.<sup>1</sup> The only aspect of this study to have attracted previous attention has been the St Mark Passion *Die betäubte und getröstete Geistliche Sulamith* (which was the original starting point of this dissertation). In the last ten years, since the first modern performance in 1986, there have been several articles on this work commenting, in the main, on the strength of its attribution to C.P.E. Bach. Only since 1988 has the association with Zerbst been established, and not until this dissertation has there been a critical survey of the music and a proper assessment of its likely authorship.

The amount of hitherto unknown primary source material that has come to light during the course of this study has been extraordinary. Besides the source material of the five Passions discussed in detail in this dissertation, the discovery of hundreds of documents pertaining to the *Konsistorium* in Zerbst - including the almost complete record of the services held in the Schloßkirche in Zerbst (none of which seems to have been known to contemporary Fasch

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<sup>1</sup> The need for the investigation of the St Luke Passion and St John Passion in Landesarchiv Oranienbaum, the subject of chapter 8, has been recognised and pointed out by Gottfried Gille in both his articles on Fasch sources. See Gille (1988) pp. 59-71 and (1989) pp.36-50.

scholars)<sup>2</sup> – will prove a valuable source for researchers for many year to come. The record of all the services in the Zerbst Schloßkirche has been particularly important for this study since it has provided a a geat deal of information on the Passion cycle performed in Zerbst. The same source has provided evidence allowing the dating of many of Fasch's cantatas.<sup>3</sup> (The dating of works and the establishment of a reliable chronology is a particular problem with the works of this composer.) Other discoveries in the course of researching this topic include the series of *Zerbstisches Gesangbücher* (not previously known to Fasch scholars) and the *Zerbster Cantional* in Oranienbaum (believed lost),<sup>4</sup> which have also provided valuable new information about the liturgy of Anhalt-Zerbst.

Modern interest in J.F. Fasch began with an article by Riemann, published at the turn of the century.<sup>5</sup> Such interest has accelerated in recent years with the creation of the Internationale Fasch Gesellschaft, which has mounted five international conferences on the music of Fasch, the publication of lists of surviving manuscript sources and a book on the composer's life and work by Rüdiger Pfeiffer.<sup>6</sup> The publication of a thematic and critical catalogue currently being prepared by Brian Clark, the *Fasch Verzeichnis*, for the Internationale Fasch Gesellschaft (to which the author will contribute the section on Passion music) will greatly assist further study in this field. There have now been major studies on most of the genres in which Fasch was active – concerto (Küntzel: 1965), symphony (Tryphon: 1954), chamber music (Schneider: 1932; and Sheldon: 1968), the Mass (Dittrich: 1991) and figural music (Stevens: 1981) – as well as a great number of shorter articles on various aspects of Fasch composition published in various periodicals since the beginning of the century.<sup>7</sup> Major

<sup>2</sup> The *Verzeichnis Wie es mit dem GottesDienst in der heisgen Hoch=Fürstl: Schloßkirche gehalten wird* is discussed in detail in Chapter 4 'Passion Music at the Court of Anhalt-Zerbst and the Zerbst liturgy'. It was clear from the library records that the author was the first in recent years to study this document. Brian Clark is beginning to sift through the other *Konsistorium* documents.

<sup>3</sup> This enabled Barbara Reul in Spring 1996 to establish the performance dates for the majority of the cycles of cantatas by Fasch and other composers performed in Zerbst - a major achievement of her dissertation. (See Reul, *The Sacred Cantatas of Johann Friedrich Fasch (1688-1758)*, PhD University of Victoria, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> According to Pfeiffer (1987) p.107. These documents are discussed in Chapter 5 'The *Zerbstisches Gesangbuch* and the Passion chorales'.

<sup>5</sup> Hugo Riemann. 'Die französische Ouvertüre (Orchester-Suite) in der ersten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts' in *Musikalisches Wochenblatt*. 30. 1899, nr.1--9 and 11.

<sup>6</sup> See Pfeiffer: 1987, 1988 and 1994.

<sup>7</sup> A list of the principal bibliographical references is included in Chapter 3.

studies have yet to be published on three main areas: the cantata (of which 67 survive of a complete oeuvre of c.700),<sup>8</sup> Passion music and the orchestral suite (*Ouverture*).

There has been very little research into Fasch's successor as Kapellmeister at Zerbst, Johann Georg Röllig; Dieter Härtwig's (almost identical) articles in *MGG* and *Grove 6* are the only modern writings on this composer. Research on the sources and music of Röllig in the preparation of this dissertation has added greatly to our knowledge of this little-known composer, and the author has been able to identify 22 cantatas, c.50 partita-works and several concerti not listed in the *Grove 6* work list.<sup>9</sup>

On the wider subject of the oratorio Passion, there have been important studies by Lott (1925), Smallman (1957) and Malinovsky (1980). Smallman views the J.S. Bach Passions as the pinnacle of oratorio Passion composition and consequently not only the end-point of his study but also the focus of his text, while Lott and Malinovsky each take a more holistic, though incomplete, view of the genre. Lott broke the ground with a broad survey of trends in principal centres in the 17th and 18th centuries, addressing both major genres of concerted Passion music (the liturgical Passion and the lyrical Passion) and sketching in the important trends, whilst Malinovsky attempted a more detailed discussion of the history of the oratorio Passion from its inception to the mid-18th century in a methodical centre-by-centre approach. None of these studies mentions the Zerbst tradition, or any of the repertoire discussed in this dissertation, and the other late-18th-century examples of the genre by Homilius and C.P.E. Bach are also all but ignored. (In the case of C.P.E. Bach, recent work by Clark (1984 and 1988) has provided much new information on the oratorio Passion in Hamburg in the late 18th century and important insights into Bach's compositional process.) Further to this, owing to the complexity of the situation in the mid-to-late 18th century and the paucity of information on stylistic trends in post-Bach Lutheran music, the placing of the unique tradition in Zerbst in the context of the broader picture is difficult. For the first time therefore, Chapter 1 attempts to outline, in as comprehensive a manner as possible within the constraints of time and space

<sup>8</sup> See Reul (1996) which makes a most valuable contribution to our knowledge of the cantata-cycles.

<sup>9</sup> Information which will be included in a forthcoming study of the known sources and a thematic catalogue. An interim work list has been included in Chapter 3 'The Kapellmeisters of the Court of Anhalt-Zerbst' and will also be published in a concise form in the revised article in the forthcoming new edition of *New Grove*, prepared by the author.



that this study allows, the conventions of the 18th-century oratorio Passion and the style of the typical mid-century example. Though far from exhaustive (a major modern study of the topic is now overdue), it provides a necessary exposition to this particular study to enable the reader to place the Zerbst tradition and the music of the surviving Zerbst Passions in the context of the known repertoire and varied contemporary performance practice dictated by local liturgy. Reference has been made to *A Directory of Oratorio Passions* which is being prepared by the author and which currently lists sources and bibliographical references for over 190 known oratorio Passions. The domination of Telemann in this discussion is difficult to avoid, since not only did he consistently experiment with the form throughout his career, but also produced nearly 60% of the surviving complete examples of the genre in the 18th century. There has been an active decision in this survey to look at general trends rather than at too many specific examples, fascinating as they are, with the hope that perhaps this chapter might provide a starting point for a major in-depth study. However, the chapter concludes with two case studies of works contemporary with the two complete Zerbst oratorio Passions, commenting on structure and style, to provide a point of comparison for later discussion.

Chapter 2 takes a fresh and critical view of the its personnel and its repertoire of the Zerbst Kapelle with regard to the performance of Passion music. Biographical details and a resumé of the main areas of compositional activity of the three full-time and one part-time Zerbst Kapellmeisters (including an overview of the current knowledge of the works of Röllig) is given in Chapter 3 whilst the tradition of Passion performances at the court of Zerbst is examined in detail in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 reviews the various sources of hymns and melodies used in the court and examines the relationship between the chorales used in the surviving Passion works by the Zerbst composers and the *Cantional* known to have been used in the Schloßkirche from c1720. Chapters 6-9 examine the music of the surviving Passion works produced by the Zerbst Kapellmeisters. Finally, Chapter 10 presents various conclusions to come out this work including the arguments for the authorship of the Zerbst oratorio Passions.

Extensive reference has been made to the Zerbst *Gesangbücher* as well as to the *Konsistorium* records. As a result, 18th-century spellings have been maintained in the thesis, except where reference has been made to a modern text.