

Command, the Song and the Remainder Resolved with Canonic Art”). If the king desires to hear an example of the reputed, amazing powers of the extemporizer Bach, then the monarch should sum up, or integrate, the different parts into the whole, and so, deliberately make his own mind grow. Just as the word itself, “ricercar,” the six-part ricercar becomes, in Bach’s hands, a metaphor for this project.

Bach’s Strategic Offensive

Bach was clearly on an offensive. In the dedication of *A Musical Offering*, he established a public standard for the King to live up to: “. . . it has none other than this irreproachable intent, to glorify, if only in a small point, the fame of a monarch whose greatness and power, as in all the sciences of war and peace, so especially in

music, everyone must admire and revere.” Frederick had surprised Europe at his military prowess in his first five years as king. However, Bach clearly knew from his son Emanuel, that Frederick’s musical sensibilities betrayed a monarch who was, as yet, still a work in progress.

Further, shortly after returning to Leipzig, Bach’s offensive included an invasion of C.L. Mizler’s “Societät der Musikalischen Wissenschaften,” a group that was at least as conflicted as the Berlin Academy. Mizler had been a student of Bach, and of the University in Leipzig, between 1731 and 1734. In 1738, he had initiated his society, to inquire into the science of music, and they circulated papers among their twenty or so members.⁶ Bach avoided membership in this association until June 1747, when he sent the members an offprint of the six-part canon from the 1741 “Goldberg” series. Further, he wrote his canonic variations on the theme of a well-known Christmas song, “Von

The Criss-Crossing Paths of Leibniz and Bach

The sixteen-year-old J.S. Bach was likely present and active in the court of Celle in 1701, at the same time that G.W. Leibniz was there, concluding the successful negotiations with Queen Sophie and the English ambassador, John Cresset, over the succession to the English throne. Leibniz had just designed the commemorative medal for the coronation of Sophie’s son-in-law as King Friedrich I of Prussia. And Sophie’s daughter, Queen Sophie Charlotte of Prussia, had just established Leibniz’s Academy of Sciences in Berlin. During this whirlwind of successes by Leibniz in 1700/1, Bach had begun study at Lüneburg in Brunswick. His voice scholarship allowed him to study Latin, Greek, and arithmetic.

Bach is believed to have accompanied a dancing master, Thomas de la Selle, to musical events in the court of Celle, where Leibniz was then carrying on the negotiations. Further, when Leibniz worked in Lüneburg, he took his meals at the school where de la Selle was employed—a school for nobles, adjacent to the school for commoners attended by Bach. At the very least, the budding musical genius cannot have failed to take note of the acknowledged, leading scientific and political genius of the courts of Brunswick, where he was being educated.

It is also possible that the genius Leibniz might have taken notice of young Bach. Bach’s first organist posi-

tion after his schooling began at Arnstadt, where the cultural life was overseen by Augusta Dorothea. She had brought to Arnstadt the theatre plan modeled on that of her father, Duke Anton Ulrich of Wolfenbüttel—Leibniz’s close associate for decades. Leibniz visited and strategized with him at Wolfenbüttel repeatedly, and became his librarian. Leibniz proposed that Anton Ulrich head a society to revive the German language, and the Duke requested Leibniz pursue projects on re-unifying Christendom! Later, Leibniz would become Councillor to the two courts, Russia and Austria, into which Anton Ulrich’s granddaughters were married.

Although it is recorded that Leibniz attended concerts with the Duke, it is not known whether Leibniz accompanied the Duke, when he attended a concert at his daughter’s Arnstadt, in August 1700. (The poet for the cantata they heard, Salomo Franck, would later work closely with Bach.) When Bach began at Arnstadt, in August 1703, Leibniz was visiting with Augusta Dorothea’s uncle in Brunswick. Of note is that the generous terms offered to the young organist Bach, suggest that his reputation might have preceded him. One real possibility would have been that Anton Ulrich or Leibniz had heard Bach, either at the Celle court, or at the Lüneburg school.

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