

‘Having to perform and direct the music in the Capellmeister’s stead for two whole years’: Observations on How Bach Understood His Post during the 1740s*

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On the occasion of Hans-Joachim Schulze’s 80th Birthday

The individual to whom this article is dedicated provided Bach scholarship with the supplementary volumes to the *Neue Bach-Ausgabe* – the *Bach-Dokumente* I–III and V (which appeared in print from 1963 onward) which, for the most part, he conceived and edited. These volumes also set new editorial standards regarding the comprehensive approach to the remarkably heterogeneous collection of extant Bach documents – and not just as far as musical biography is concerned.

Despite Hans-Joachim Schulze’s meticulousness when examining and commenting on Bach documents, however, there are ‘unavoidable gaps’ in Bach’s biography,¹ and the impression persists that Bach was ‘as close as an oyster’² when it came to his output. This became even more apparent when the supplementary volumes were published. Consequently, one of the central tasks of Bach scholarship in the 21st century continues to be the discovery and examination of new sources.

Full references to standard Bach literature, and abbreviations used in *Understanding Bach*, 12 (2017) can be found at bachnetwork.co.uk/ub12/ub12-abbr.pdf.

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¹ Cf. Hans-Joachim Schulze, ‘Über die “unvermeidlichen Lücken” in Bachs Lebensbeschreibung’, in Reinhold Brinkmann (ed.), *Bachforschung und Bachinterpretation heute, Wissenschaftler und Praktiker im Dialog, Bericht über das Bachfest-Symposium 1978 der Philipps-Universität Marburg* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1981), 32–42, specifically p. 32; see also *Bach-Dokumente* III, no. 803, and *The New Bach Reader*, no. 395.

² Quotation by Paul Hindemith, 1950, included in Hans-Joachim Schulze, *Studien zur Bach-Überlieferung im 18. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig and Dresden: Peters, 1984), text on dust cover.

Since many primary sources—specifically letters and biographical documents from Bach’s own hand—were either lost a long time ago, or in some cases were never written down, secondary sources must be made to sparkle. We continue to be hopeful that contemporaneous witnesses, Bach’s students and colleagues, recorded their—now very much sought after—knowledge regarding his personality and musical practice. Several years ago, in an attempt to identify relevant sources, the Bach-Archiv began systematically to reconstruct the biographies of about 380 resident students who had attended Leipzig’s Thomasschule during Bach’s tenure as cantor. In central Germany at least, our wish that new sources would come to light to tell us something about Bach himself has come true, even if in rather unexpected ways. The document to be introduced below is one such that fills a particularly big gap in Bach’s biography, namely how he carried out his duties as cantor in the 1740s.

For the small town of Döbeln—halfway between Leipzig and Dresden—an era of sacred music came to an end on 21 February 1751, with the death, after over fifty years of service, of the local cantor Gottfried Fleckeisen, once a ‘Thomaner’, i.e. a student attending the Thomasschule, under Johann Schelle (Thomaskantor from 1677 to 1701).³ Despite his advanced age of 72 years, Fleckeisen had been able to carry out his duties almost until the very end. Only during his last year of service had he noticed that his ‘powers [were] diminishing daily’ (‘Kräfte täglich abnehmen’). As a result, he penned a letter four days prior to his death in which he requested the town council to approve his retirement and appoint ‘his son’ as his substitute—this was done in an effort, he wrote, to avoid ‘my family finding itself in dire circumstances after my death’ (‘nach meinem Absterben die Meinigen nicht in jammervolle Umstände solten veraset werden’). Fleckeisen appeared confident that the town council would grant his request and thus remove this ‘sad thought’ (‘traurige Vorstellung’) from his mind, since the town fathers had in the past already ‘shown the greatest acts of kindness’ (‘die größten Wohlthaten erzeiget’) to his four sons, all of whom he had ‘sent to university to study’ (‘studiren lassen’).⁴

The plan to hand over the letter was thwarted by Fleckeisen’s death. His son-in-law, the Döbeln *Quartus* (lit. ‘fourth [colleague]’) Johann Georg Helbig, delivered it immediately following the cantor’s death. In an accompanying letter Helbig added that his brother-in-law, Gottfried Benjamin Fleckeisen, was the son in question. The latter was ‘without singing his praises, a fine tenor and very well versed in the humanities’ (‘ohne Ruhm zu melden, ein feiner Tenor Sänger und in Humanioribus gar fein beschlagen [sei]’); hence, there was ‘good reason [to

³ According to Reinhard Vollhardt, *Geschichte der Cantoren und Organisten von den Städten im Königreich Sachsen* (Berlin, 1899; repr. Leipzig: Peters, 1978), 59, Fleckeisen was cantor in Döbeln from 1704 to 1751. In 1751 he counted ‘in die 51’ years (literally ‘going into the 51st year’, i.e. between 50 and 51 years) of service himself; presumably, he first deputised for his predecessor Johann Otto who held the post for half a century (from 1656 until his death in 1704).

⁴ Quotations are from the letters preserved at the Pfarrarchiv Döbeln, H 2934: ‘Acta des Cantorats nach Absterben Herrn Gottfried Fleckeisens zu Döbeln betr. Anno 1751’, fols. 3–4.

believe that...] he would make a good school teacher' ('die gute Hoffnung, er werde ein guter Schulmann werden').⁵

Having been suggested as his father's successor, G. B. Fleckeisen (born on 19 February 1719 in Döbeln) then submitted two application letters to the town council, one in German and one in Latin. (Both handwriting samples lead to the conclusion that he had also been the one to draw up his father's letters a few days before he died.) While Fleckeisen junior focused on showing off his language skills in the letter written in Latin,⁶ he provided an outline of his education in the German letter. He had apparently greatly distinguished himself during his time as an alumnus at Leipzig's Thomasschule and expressed, in obsequious detail, his gratitude for the financial support received to date from his home town:

Most Serene Noble and Most W[ise Persons], it is due to my father's death that I send this letter to you. The elderly, deceased man, who had served faithfully and diligently as cantor of the local town school for between 50 and 51 years, was confident throughout his life that after his death a son of his would be chosen by the town [council] to replace him. For my late father had remembered carefully all of the great acts of kindness shown in part to him and in part to his children by Your Most Serene Nobles over the course of fifty-one years. Where could my late father have sent four sons to study at university, if, as loving fathers of this town, they had not provided him most generously with the greatest benefactions and stipends for his sons? As far as I am concerned, I spent nine years as a student at the Thomasschule in Leipzig; for four years I served as prefect of the *chorus musicus*. For two whole years I had to perform the music at the principal churches, St Thomas and [St] Nicolai, in the Capellmeister's stead, and to conduct it, and without singing my own praises [I wish to emphasise that I] always passed with honours. I spent five years at Leipzig University and made this the ultimate purpose of my studies, so that I could be of service to God and my fatherland [and work] in a school, making use of my given talents. Since You, Most Serene Noble and Most W[ise Persons], have not only shown in a fatherly and loving way the greatest acts of kindness to my other three brothers at university, but also to me in particular, and I belong to them in a way, I did not hesitate to take this opportunity to recommend myself as best as I could to You.

Ew: Hochwohledlen, und Hochwohlw: mit dieser Zuschrift aufzuwarten, verursacht der Todt meines seeligen Vaters. Dieser alte seelige Kreis, welcher in die 51. Jahr hiesiger *Lateinischen* Stadt-Schule, als Cantor, treu und fleißig vorgestanden, hat in seinem Leben das beständige Vertrauen gehabt, daß dieselben nach seinen Absterben einen Sohn an seine Stadt gütigst erwehlen würden. Denn mein seeliger Vater hatte in seinem Gedächtniß sorgfältig aufgehoben alle diejenigen großen Wohlthaten, so Ew: Hochwohledl: und Hochwohlw: in die 51 Jahr theils ihm, theils seinen

⁵ Ibid, fols. 1-2. (Translator's note: A *Quartus* taught students who attended the 'Quarta'; incoming students attended the 'Septa', graduating students the 'Prima'. Unlike the modern school grade/year system, students in Bach's time could not progress to the next class/grade until they had attained the standard, regardless of their age.)

⁶ Ibid, fols. 7-8; written on 27 February 1751 in Döbeln.

Kindern erzeiget haben. Wo hätte mein seeliger Vater 4 Söhne können studieren lassen? wann nicht dieselben, ihm, als liebeiche Väter dieser Stadt, auf die großmüthigste Art die grösten *Beneficia*, und *Stipendia*, vor seine Söhne angedeyen lassen. Was mich anbelanget, so bin ich 9 Jahr auf der *Thomas* Schule in Leipzig als *Alumnus* gewesen, und habe daselbst 4. Jahr als *Praefectus* dem *Choro musico* vorgestanden. Zwey ganzer Jahr habe die *Music* in den HauptKirchen zu *S. Thomae*, und *Nicolai* an Statt des *Capellmeisters* aufführen, und *dirigiren* müssen, und ohne Ruhm zumelden, allezeit mit Ehren bestanden. Fünff Jahr bin ich in Leipzig auf der *Universität* gewesen, und habe besonders dieses den Endzweck meines Studierens seyn lassen, damit ich Gott, und dem Vaterland, in einer Schule, nach meinem verliehenen Talent dienen könne. Da nun Ew: Hochwohledl: und Hochwohlw: nicht nur meinen übrigen dreyen Brüdern, sondern auch besonders mir, auf der *Uniuersität* die grösten Wohlthaten, recht väterlich, und liebeich erzeiget haben, und ich denenselben, also auf gewisse Weise angehöre; so habe auch bey dieser Gelegenheit meine Wenigkeit denenselben mich bestens zuempfehlen, um desto weniger Anstand nehmen können.⁷

Soon after, Fleckeisen could be confident that he would indeed follow in his father's footsteps: he was among the three applicants whose auditions for the cantorate had, with regard to 'performing music and singing hymns' ('Musiciren und Lieder singen'), been 'acknowledged as proficient' ('vor tüchtig erkant') by the town council and the pastor. However, the pastor also complained about the three contenders possessing rather limited pedagogical skills. About Fleckeisen he stated in the minutes: 'He has, as far as I can tell, a good heart' ('Er hat, so viel ich mercke, ein gutes Herz').⁸ Meanwhile, a fellow applicant, Christoph Friedrich Bennefeld from Leipzig, won, by a narrow majority, the final vote taken by the Döbeln Senate.⁹ The determining factor may have been his 'decent' ('ordentliche') work experience. Bennefeld had served as cantor in the neighbouring town of Roßwein for many years. That *Quartus* Helbig not only used an increasingly nasty tone when demanding that his brother-in-law Fleckeisen be hired, but proceeded to add his own name to the list of applicants for the position, must surely also have played a role too. Helbig repeatedly insisted on being entitled to the position as per the written confirmation issued previously to him by the town council. In case of non-compliance, he threatened to quit scheduling organists immediately, a task he had performed free of charge for the past five years. This threat may well have been the reason why many a town councillor drew the conclusion that every effort must be made to avoid domestic entanglements

⁷ Ibid, fols. 5–6; also written on 27 February 1751 in Döbeln.

⁸ Comment written by a civic clerk from on 22 March 1751 in 'Acta des Cantorats' (see note 4); see also the report prepared by Pastor Gottlieb Ludewig Aster, Pfarrarchiv Döbeln, P 2547: 'Wahl des Christoph Friedrich Bennefeld zum Cantor 1751'.

⁹ Carl Benjamin Bielitz (cantor in Colditz 1741–85, former *Kruzianer*, i.e. a graduate of the Dresden *Kreuzschule*, and a student of Theodor Christlieb Reinhold) had been shortlisted as well. Applications had also been received from the university student Johann Daniel Osswald (cantor in Hainichen from 1751 onwards, later cantor in Mittweida) and Johann Georg Baeuckert, who hailed from Dresden (all application letters in 'Acta des Cantorats', see note 4).

amongst the local school staff.¹⁰ There can be no doubt that Helbig's defiant behaviour would have damaged his brother-in-law's case.

Moreover, no one ever seems to have accused Fleckeisen junior of being unsuitable or making bogus claims: he was chosen for the cantor position of Roßwein—which had become vacant after Bennefeld's departure—in 1751 and held that post until his death on 11 November 1789.¹¹

In view of the outcome of his application, there are several compelling reasons why this new primary source—which undoubtedly concerns Capellmeister Bach—must be taken seriously and at face value, specifically Fleckeisen's claim that he had 'to perform and direct the music at the principal churches, St Thomas and [St] Nicolai, in the Capellmeister's stead for two whole years' ('zwey ganzer Jahr ... die Music in den Haupt-Kirchen zu S. Thomae, und Nicolai an Statt des Capellmeisters aufführen, und dirigiren müssen'). We must definitely refrain from dismissing it as a deception or gross exaggeration, even though four years earlier, when Fleckeisen had applied—unsuccessfully—for the cantorate in Leisnig, he did not refer specifically to the two years during which he claims to have replaced Bach. To emphasise his suitability for the post he had used the following wording in the (non-autograph) manuscript letter:

because I attended the Thomasschule in Leipzig for nine years and performed with [*sic*: conducted?] the *chorus musicus* for four years; moreover, I was at the *Academie* [university] for four years in Leipzig where I studied theology. Nevertheless, I diligently attended the *collegia musica* [rehearsals] and was involved as a performer on various occasions

weil ich 9 Jahr auf der Thomas-Schule in Leipzig gewesen, und 4. Jahr das *chorum musicum* daselbst aufgeföhret [*sic*] habe, über dieses bin ich 4. Jahr in Leipzig gewesen auf der *Academie*, und daselbst mein *studium Theologicum* *prosequiret*, nichts destoweniger habe ich in diesen 4. Jahren die *Collegia Musica* fleißig mit besucht und mich zu unterschiedenen mahlen hören lassen¹²

His reasons for this seemingly 'modest' wording will be examined in more detail below.

In any event, Fleckeisen would have had no reason in 1751 to tell lies to the Döbeln town fathers. The councillors were not looking for a 'Wunderkind' who was skilled enough to hold the office of Thomaskantor at Leipzig. They sought a God-fearing teacher who possessed good pedagogical skills, solid musical knowledge and performing experience, who could direct the music at the church and serve as the main—and at times the only—vocalist, and who could fill in some of the gaps in the church orchestra if necessary. As a person who had grown up in Döbeln and as the long-time recipient of various local bequests,

¹⁰ Materials in 'Acta des Cantorats' (see note 4); additional sources in Pfarrarchiv Döbeln, H 2935–2937.

¹¹ According to the Roßwein church records, Fleckeisen married Johanna Maria Müller, the daughter of a local cloth maker. They had eight children; there were no musicians among the godparents (information kindly provided by the Pfarramt Roßwein).

¹² Stadtarchiv Leisnig, no. 7192, fols. 53r–54r.

Fleckeisen was one of the most promising applicants anyway. It is, therefore, difficult to imagine that he would have made false—and entirely unnecessary—claims that would have been easy to verify and that could have seriously tarnished his reputation in the long run. After all, it was universal practice among patrons, pastors and headmasters to request information about the candidate from persons and institutions who were named in the application letter—in Fleckeisen’s case it would most likely have been the rector of the Thomasschule, Johann August Ernesti. If Fleckeisen’s declarations had turned out to be falsified, he would probably not have been appointed cantor of the neighbouring town of Roßwein.

Making sense of Fleckeisen’s various claims is more difficult, in particular his comment about having served as prefect at the Thomasschule for four years and—during that time or afterwards?—‘having to perform and direct’ (‘aufführen, und dirigiren müssen’) church music in Bach’s stead for two ‘whole years’ (‘ganzer Jahr’). Which specific time frame was Fleckeisen referring to? Several different answers are provided in extant Leipzig sources.

Fleckeisen’s claim—made in both the Döbeln and the Leisnig application letters—that he had attended the Thomasschule for nine years, matches evidence provided in the school’s archival material, which shows that on 2 May 1732 his name had been entered in the enrolment records of *externi*, i.e. day students at the Thomasschule. Later that year, on 9 October, the thirteen-year-old was listed in the ‘Alumniematrikel’, the enrolment records of students who boarded at the school; on that occasion he promised to stay for seven and a half years, i.e. until Easter 1740.¹³ Valedictory speeches were customarily delivered by the highest-performing students as part of a festive ‘Rede-Actus’ just before they left the school, which was after Easter. However, Fleckeisen gave his speech on 3 May 1743, i.e. eleven, not nine, years after entering the school.¹⁴ Around that time Fleckeisen also received his ‘Caution’ which had been accumulating over the years: the approximately 31 Reichsthaler was a rather typical sum for former top achievers in the ‘Cantoreyen’ (church choirs) and students who had chosen to go down the prefect path prior to graduation.¹⁵

It is evident that Rector Ernesti had added three years to the originally agreed period that Fleckeisen was to spend at the school. While this was common

¹³ ‘Album Alumnorum Thomanorum’, in Stadtarchiv Leipzig, ‘Thomasschule’, no. 483, fol. 36v, and Andreas Glöckner, ‘Alumni und Externe in den Kantoreien der Thomasschule zur Zeit Bachs’, *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 92 (2006), 9–36, specifically 15.

¹⁴ See Johann August Ernesti, *De Grata Negligentia Orationis Prolosio Scholastica Orationevolis III in Schola Thomana A. D. III. MAII ...*, [Leipzig 1743], [page] xii.

¹⁵ This sum is based on the 15 Groschen which Fleckeisen paid to the school in 1743 as per an entry in the library funds account book (Stadtarchiv Leipzig, ‘Thomasschule’ no. 283, fol. 20v). According to the school regulations from 1723, ‘6 pennies from each Thaler’ (‘vom Thaler 6. Pfennige’), i.e. c. two per cent of the ‘Caution’—monies earned by the student for singing with the *Kurrende*, on New Year’s Day and on other occasions—had to be paid into the library fund. This practice and the significance of this security deposit managed by the rector is detailed in Michael Maul, ‘“welche ieder Zeit aus den 8 besten Subjectis bestehen muß” — Die erste “Cantorey” der Thomasschule: Organisation, Aufgaben, Fragen’, *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 99 (2013), 11–77, specifically 19–20.

practice, attending school for eleven years would have clearly exceeded the (seven year) average stay of other alumni, i.e. students who boarded at the school; the only other graduating student who had entered the school at the same time as Fleckeisen was Christian Beck from Baalsdorf.¹⁶ Surprisingly, Ernesti had jotted down the following below Fleckeisen’s entry in the enrolment records: ‘dismissed in 1746’ (‘dimissus a[nno] 1746’). Ernesti thus identified 1746 as the year in which Fleckeisen had, in fact, left the Thomasschule. Since there is no reason to assume that Ernesti was three years off the mark when providing this piece of information (probably straight after the fact),¹⁷ Fleckeisen must have continued to live as an alumnus at the Thomasschule for three years after graduation – an odd situation in so far as there was an iron-clad law that required alumni who had finished their schooling to leave their quarters straight away (in order to make room for the newly accepted boys). According to accessible archival documents pertaining to the period 1650–1800, no other alumnus stayed as long at the school as Fleckeisen – fourteen years! – and it is impossible to ascertain from available primary source materials whether other students attending the Thomasschule would have been able to remain in their quarters as

¹⁶ Besides Fleckeisen, Beck is the only other graduand from the Thomasschule during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who, according to the school’s registers, stayed for over ten years. Beck, born in Baalsdorf in 1716, enrolled – just like Fleckeisen – on 9 October 1732 (‘Album Alumnorum Thomanorum’, see note 13, fol. 36r) and, according to Ernesti’s entry regarding his leaving the school, i.e. graduation, stayed on as a student until 1743 (the comment reads verbatim: ‘dimissus a. 1743 [difficult to decipher, apparently amended from either ‘1741’ or ‘1747’] cum insigni doctrinae et probit[at]is testimonio’ [‘dismissed in 1743 with an outstanding report card attesting to his scholarliness and integrity’]. However, Beck had already delivered his valedictory speech in May 1741 (J. A. Ernesti, *Defensio Veterom Philosophorum Adversus Eos Qui Methodom Mathematicam ... Orat[i]oncolis in Schola Thomanica D. XXI. April ...*, Leipzig 1743, [page] xvi); he received his ‘Caution’ (‘Thomasschule’, no. 283, see note 15, fol. 19r) and enrolled as a theology student at Leipzig University that very same month, albeit as ‘Depositus’ (see Georg Erler, *Die jüngeren Matrikel der Universität Leipzig 1559–1809 als Personen- und Ortsregister bearbeitet und durch Nachträge aus den Promotionslisten ergänzt*, 3 vols (Leipzig: Giesecke & Devrient, 1909), vol. III: *Die Immatrikulationen vom Wintersemester 1634 bis zum Sommersemester 1809* [hereafter: Erler III], 17). According to the university’s convocation lists, he had already finished his Bachelor’s degree by December 1744 and his Master’s degree in 1745. Therefore, it is doubtful that he had indeed registered early. According to an overview of Thomasschule graduates, he became ‘Praef[ect] I’ in 1739 and, according to a reference by Bach from 18 April 1743 (in support of an application for the ‘Hammersches Stipendium’ to study theology), he supposedly held the ‘post of a prefect [literally:] going into the 4th year’ (‘Amt eines Praefecti in die 4 Jahr’, see Andreas Glöckner, ‘Johann Sebastian Bach und die Universität Leipzig: Neue Quellen (Teil I)’, *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 94 (2008), 159–201, specifically 189–90. In 1748 he became vice-principal of the Klosterschule Roßleben, but died after only 14 months of service (Theodor Herold, *Geschichte der von der Familie von Witzleben gestifteten Klosterschule Roßleben von 1554 bis 1854*, Halle 1854, 39 and 81).

¹⁷ The argument that when entering the comment about Fleckeisen’s year of departure, i.e. graduation, Ernesti could have confused him with his younger brother Christian Gottlob, who enrolled at the Thomasschule in 1736 and stayed for eight years (‘Album Alumnorum Thomanorum’, see note 13, fol. 61v), is hardly plausible: the younger Fleckeisen had delivered his valedictory speech and received his ‘Caution’ in May 1744; that same month he enrolled at the University of Leipzig (see note 16, Erler III, 90; however, Ernesti gave his graduation year as 1745 (see note 18 below); that same year Bach claimed in hindsight that Christian Gottlob had served as prefect at the Neukirche for two years; see Glöckner, see note 16, 190–1.

well, and stay for such an extended period of time, possibly even taking up university studies. Furthermore, it is curious that the dates provided by Ernesti regarding the departure of a select few of the other students who had graduated in 1743, differ (usually by no more than one year) from dates provided elsewhere regarding their valedictory speeches, receiving their 'Cautionen' and – unless the boys had submitted their deposits early – their enrolment at university.¹⁸ The second exception, in addition to Fleckeisen, seems to have been the aforementioned prefect Christian Beck. He left the school – if my reading of the subsequently made correction to Ernesti's entry, '1743', is correct – two years after he had delivered his valedictory speech and received his 'Caution' (both took place in April 1741); consequently, he could have already begun his studies at the university in 1741.¹⁹

At the same time there can also be no doubt that Fleckeisen had already entered university in 1743 and – as pointed out in his Leisnig application – studied theology for four years by 1747. According to the university's enrolment records, a deposit had already been made in his name in 1739;²⁰ there is no further information on how his studies proceeded. But the extant primary sources which – as previously noted in the Döbeln application letter – refer to the stipends that he received from his home town, are highly informative. He had signed two receipts in Leipzig dated 1 April (Easter quarter) and 2 October 1744 (*Michaelis* quarter) as 'Most Holy Student of Theology' ('S. S. Theol. Studiosus') to acknowledge receipt of two 'Kretzschmar Stipendium' instalments paid out six months apart; this financial support was given to promising theology students hailing from Döbeln.²¹ In a memorandum concerning this matter we read: '1744 the Easter quarter instalment was received by Mons. Fleckeisen, the cantor's son, after much argument' ('1744 den Ostertermin bekam nach viel Streit Mons. Fleckeisen, des Cantoris Sohn').²² Could the objective of the unspecified dispute have been to bring to light either that Fleckeisen was already receiving support as a university student from elsewhere – free room and board at the Thomasschule? – or that he was unable to devote his full attention to his studies? Furthermore, in 1747 Fleckeisen received funds from the 'Lehmannisches Stipendium',²³ another foundation set up for theology students from Döbeln.

¹⁸ This concerns the alumni Johann Friedemann Kern, Johann Gottfried Kade and Christian Gottlob Fleckeisen: they graduated in 1744, according to the written invitation and the library donations account book, i.e. the year of their enrolment at the university; according to Ernesti's comment in the 'Alumniematrikel', they graduated in 1745. Gottlob Friedrich Hildebrand also received his 'Caution' and enrolled at the university in 1743, but according to Ernesti's entry in the school registers, he left only in 1745. It is not always possible to determine from the university enrolment records whether the individuals – in an effort to cut costs – enrolled early as so-called 'Depositii', or whether the date given referred to when they took up their studies.

¹⁹ See the biographical information provided in note 16.

²⁰ See note 16, Erlar III, 90.

²¹ Stadtarchiv Döbeln, nos. 181 and 182 (annual financial statements of the town of Döbeln, 1743–5).

²² Pfarrarchiv Döbeln, T 883: 'Acten das von M. Samuel Lehmann Pastor zu Neustadt am Scharfenberge im Jahre 1692 ausgesetzte Legat', unpaginated overview of the recipients of the *Döbelner Stiftungen*.

²³ Ibid.

Fleckeisen's activities as a prefect can also be verified. In a fragmentary list of all members of the 'Chorus III.', written in 1740/41, his name appears with the addition 'Praef.';²⁴ in an unpublished overview of the alumni of the Thomasschule from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries,²⁵ a note has been added to Fleckeisen's name that reads 'Praef. 1. 1742'. This indicates that he had apparently taken over as first prefect in 1742. These sources match the claims that Fleckeisen had made in both application letters regarding his activities, because such a career path would only have been taken by alumni during the last two years of schooling, leading from the fourth to the first prefecture.²⁶ The four years during which Fleckeisen claimed he had been 'in charge of the *chorus musicus* as prefect' ('Praefectus dem Choro musico vorgestanden') and 'performed with the *chorus musicus* there' ('das chorum musicum daselbst aufgeföhret habe') must, therefore, have been the period 1739/40 to 1743.

The evidence presented here strengthens the impression that Fleckeisen—despite not being identified elsewhere as a person who moved in Bach's inner circle—must at times have performed a special function at the Thomasschule, namely the one described in the application letter for Döbeln. Even though it is puzzling that he stayed at the boarding school ('Alumnat') for two years after having finished his schooling, we must not assume that 'the whole two years' in which he had 'to perform and direct' the 'music at the principal churches of St Thomas and St Nicolai in the Capellmeister's stead' corresponded to his last two years of schooling. They could also refer to a later time, i.e. after he had worked his way up the prefect ladder (c. 1743/44 to 1745/46); this would obviously contradict Fleckeisen's specifications in the application letter for Leisnig, even if the exact chronology of events and the possibility of his serving (perhaps only for a short time) as first prefect and director of church music simultaneously are not directly clear from Fleckeisen's comment. If he had indeed become first prefect in 1742 (most likely after Easter) and left school after Easter in 1743, then he would not have been first prefect for 'two whole years' but merely for one, or, expressed in more generous terms, 'in die zwei Jahre' (literally 'going into the second year'). It is also conceivable that Fleckeisen was allowed to keep his 'right of residence' at the Thomasschule until 1746 due to special services rendered (until the official end of his schooling or slightly beyond). What we know for sure is merely that he was no longer a member of the church choirs after 1743: the well-known list of the *Thomaner* 'Choir [memberships] from Pentecost 1744 to Pentecost 1745' ('Chöre von Pfingsten 1744. biß Pfingsten 1745') lists the names of all active

²⁴ Regarding a dating of the list, preserved in a vocal part in the *Florilegium Portense*, see Glöckner, 'Alumni und Externe', 15–17.

²⁵ Supplement to Johann Friedrich Köhler's autograph manuscript copy of *Historia Scholarum Lipsiensium* (see note 45 below); a detailed examination is in preparation.

²⁶ The best-known examples are the career paths of the individuals involved in the 'Prefects' Dispute' in 1736; see specifically *Bach-Dokumente* I, no. 34 (translated in *The New Bach Reader*, No. 183) and *Bach-Dokumente* II, nos. 382–3 (translated in *The New Bach Reader*, nos. 184 and 186); 'Rechnungshefte' (account booklets) from the second half of the eighteenth century pertaining to the collected music funds confirm this practice (examined by Maul, "'welche ieder Zeit aus den 8 besten Subjectis bestehen muß'", 20–21).

alumni (with the exception of Born); Fleckeisen's name is not present.²⁷ But this source fails to provide information about the director of church music at the time. The background to this list was, however, remarkable. It concerned a controversy surrounding the question of whether a member of the 'Cantoreyen' could be appointed 'Leichenfamulus', i.e. the student who assisted at funerals. Yet Bach appeared neither as a recorder of information nor as someone taking action in this well-documented affair.

For Fleckeisen's supposed two-year 'musical directorship' – i.e. between 1742 and 1746 – and for the 1740s in general, only very few specific references confirm musical performances in the main churches that were evidently directed by Bach. The majority pertain to performances of Passion music on Good Friday – specifically, the recently discovered libretto from 1744 for the repeat performance of his St Mark Passion;²⁸ references to one or more performances of his St Matthew Passion in 1742 (or slightly later)²⁹ and to his St John Passion in 1749/50³⁰; and several less concrete pieces of evidence for performances of Passion-pasticcios and possibly of Handel's Brockes Passion.³¹ There is no indication that Bach composed entirely new church music at that time either, except for the emendations that were necessary to complete the Mass in B Minor – a work which may not be relevant at all as far as Bach's calendar of performances in Leipzig is concerned. Much easier to come by are references to performances of works by other composers, mostly Latin sacred music of remarkably differing quality and retrospective character.³²

²⁷ See Glöckner, 'Alumni und Externe', 18–22, and Maul, "'welche ieder Zeit aus den 8 besten Subjectis bestehen muß'", 16–17.

²⁸ See Tatiana Shabalina, "'Texte zur Music'" in Sankt Petersburg – Weitere Funde', *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 95 (2009), 11–48, specifically 30–6 and 45–8.

²⁹ See Hans-Joachim Schulze and Christoph Wolff, *Bach-Compendium, Analytisch-bibliographisches Repertorium der Werke Johann Sebastian Bachs* (Leipzig: Peters, 1986), D3b, and Yoshitake Kobayashi, 'Zur Chronologie der Spätwerke Johann Sebastian Bachs: Kompositions- und Aufführungstätigkeit von 1736 bis 1750', *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 74 (1988), 7–72, specifically 50 and 52.

³⁰ Kobayashi (see note 29) 63, and Peter Wollny, 'Neue Bach-Funde', *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 83 (1997), 7–50, specifically 42, as well as Johann Sebastian Bach, *Johannespassion ... Fassung IV (1749)*, ed. Peter Wollny (Stuttgart: Carus, 2001), Preface, vii.

³¹ On this topic and various other sources that are obviously connected to additional performances of older works by Bach, see Kobayashi, 'Zur Chronologie der Spätwerke Johann Sebastian Bachs', 46–61, and Joshua Rifkin, 'Notenformen und Nachtragsstimmen – Zur Chronologie der Kantaten "Die Himmel erzählen die Ehre Gottes" BWV 76 und "Also hat Gott die Welt geliebet" BWV 68', *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 94 (2008), 203–28.

³² Kobayashi, 'Zur Chronologie der Spätwerke Johann Sebastian Bachs', 7–72. Furthermore, see Daniel R. Melamed, 'Eine Motette Sebastian Knüpfers aus J. S. Bachs Notenbibliothek', *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 75 (1989), 191–6 (includes a set of parts for Sebastian Knüpfer's motet *Erforsche mich, Gott*, arguably prepared by Bach in 1746/7); Peter Wollny, 'Eine unbekannte Bach-Handschrift und andere Quellen zur Leipziger Musikgeschichte in Weißenfels', *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 99 (2013), 129–70, specifically 130–7 (includes a set of parts for Francesco Gasparini's 'Missa canonica', prepared by Bach and others 1739–42); Peter Wollny, 'Tennstädt, Leipzig, Naumburg, Halle – Neuerkenntnisse zur Bach-Überlieferung in Mitteldeutschland', *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 88 (2002), 29–60, specifically 29–33 (includes a set of parts for Palestrina's 'Missa sine nomine', prepared by Bach and Georg Heinrich Noah around 1742).

In contrast, Bach's trips are documented in considerably more detail and frequency: he went to Berlin at least twice (in 1741 and 1747), and travelled to an unknown destination in the spring of 1744, supposedly for five weeks.³³

Many documents that concern Bach's execution of duties at the time paint a picture of a cantor who demonstrated little commitment to fulfilling his main responsibilities and lacked willingness to negotiate compromises in an effort to resolve conflicts. Already during the 1730s Christian Ludwig Stieglitz (town councillor and since 1729 director, i.e. 'alderman' and commercial manager, of the Thomasschule) had complained, at least during the Assembly of Elders at the town hall, about Bach's poor work ethic and his unwillingness to cooperate: in 1734, immediately following the departure of rector Gesner, Stieglitz emphasised that 'the cantor made his office as director of the Thomasschule very difficult, as he did not do anything at the school that he was obliged to do' ('daß ihme sein Vorsteher Amt bey der Schule zu St. Thomae, durch den Cantor sehr schwer gemacht werde, indem derselbe gar nicht in der Schule thäte, was ihme zu thun obliege').³⁴ Five years later Stieglitz expressed similar sentiments in a little-known comment about a supply teacher position that needed to be filled. When the Assembly of Elders discussed the reappointment of the *Baccalaureus funerum* post in December 1739, its members eventually realised that the successful candidate would have to possess musical skills in order to 'teach those boys how to sing' ('denen Knaben das Singen beyzubringen'). Of course, proconsul Hölzel as well as Stieglitz, the director of the school, spoke out against the candidates being examined by the Thomaskantor. Hölzel felt that Bach's assessment would surely 'turn out to be prejudiced' ('praejudicirlich ausfallen'); Stieglitz stated for the record that he 'finds the examination unnecessary because the cantor would be dealing only with students who were still learning their ABCs' ('[h]ält die Probe vor unnöthig, weiln der Cantor nur mit A.B.C. Schülern zu thun hätte'), and that 'the cantor had shown much defiance, which in this case could lead to frustration' ('auch der Cantor sehr wiederig sich bezeigte so könnte disfalls Verdrüsslichkeit entstehen'). Ultimately, Bach did examine the applicants. His top choice, Georg Irmner, was selected because of his 'fine manner of singing' ('feine Singarth').³⁵

Already around 1740 Bach stopped demanding the full amount of 'Schongelder' (compensation payments; literally 'funds to conserve [human]

³³ See Steffen Langusch, "'... auf des Herrn Capellmeisters Bach recommendation ...': Bachs Mitwirken an der Besetzung des Kantorats der Altstadt Salzwedel 1743/44', *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 93 (2007), 9–43, specifically 32–3, and *Bach-Dokumente* V, A 45c.

³⁴ *Bach-Dokumente* II, no. 355. Regarding the context of this statement see Michael Maul, '*Dero berühmter Chor*' – *Die Leipziger Thomasschule und ihre Kantoren 1212–1804* (Leipzig: Lehmsstedt, 2012), 234 (translator's note: an English translation will be published by Boydell & Brewer in 2018). Similar statements on the part of the town council members are already evident from minutes of meetings held by the Assembly of Elders, dated 2 August 1730 and 25 August 1730, included in *Bach-Dokumente* II, nos. 280–1 (translated in *The New Bach Reader*, no. 150a–b); see also Maul, '*Dero berühmter Chor*', 218–31.

³⁵ See minutes of the meetings of the 'Enger Rat' ('Inner Council') on 10 December 1739 and 19 January 1740 in the Stadtarchiv Leipzig, *Tit. VIII. 63*, fols. 308f. and 318f. Bach's examination report is included in *Bach-Dokumente* I, no. 76 (translated in *The New Bach Reader*, no. 215); regarding the context of the document, see Maul, '*Dero berühmter Chor*', 247–9.

resources'). They had been introduced into the school's budget in 1682—by cantor Schelle—in an effort to release the best soprano choristers ('Discantisten') among the Thomasschule alumni from their singing duties on streets and alleys (and thus allow them to preserve their strength for performing at church), and to reimburse them for lost revenue. While Bach continued to receive his share of the 'Schongelder' funds provided by the Thomaskirche regularly until the end of his tenure (administrator: Burgomaster Lange), the payments made by the Nikolaikirche stalled from 1739 onwards and ceased completely in 1743; supposedly Bach had neglected to pass on to the sole warden of the Nikolaikirche, Burgomaster Jacob Born, the names of the students who had been exempted.³⁶ After Gottlob Harrer had, 'with the greatest applause' ('mit größten Applausu'), 'as commanded by' ('auf Befehl') and in the presence of the 'majority of the' ('meisten') town councillors, 'auditioned for the Thomaskantorat, to prepare for the death of Capellmeister and cantor Herr Sebast[ian] Bach' ('[eine] Proba zum Cantorat zu St. Thomae [abgelegt], wenn der Capellmeister und Cantor Herr Sebast: Bach versterben sollte') at the 'Drey Schwanen' Inn in 1749,³⁷ Born complained to the council that 'no suitable soprano chorister' ('kein brauchbarer Discantist') could be found for Harrer's performance.³⁸

In other words, given the archival materials presented here and the general atmosphere then—shaped by the 'Prefects' Dispute' (1736);³⁹ the rather curious decision to prohibit Bach from performing a scheduled Passion music in 1739; and Johann Adolph Scheibe's criticism of Bach which apparently caused rather unpleasant changes in the Thomaskantor's relationship with the *collegium musicum* and with Carl Gotthilf Gerlach, director of music at the Neukirche⁴⁰—it is conceivable that during the 1740s Bach could indeed have increasingly, or at least for a certain length of time, withdrawn either fully or partially from his duties as director of regularly scheduled church music (possibly with the exception of the Christmas, Easter and Pentecost feast days and the vespers service on Good Friday). This could be interpreted in the same vein as the 'self-imposed quasi-retirement' that Christoph Wolff suggested at least as far as Bach's teaching responsibilities and incentive to compose sacred music are concerned⁴¹—either he was disappointed with the most recent school policy,

³⁶ See *Bach-Dokumente* II, nos. 173 and 174; Christine Fröde, 'Zu einer Kritik des Thomanerchores von 1749', *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 70 (1984), 53–8, specifically 53–4; and Maul, 'Der berühmte Chor', 255–6. An overview of the wardens of the two main churches is found on pages 340–4; from 1728 until 1742 Born had shared the post of director with Johann August Hölzel.

³⁷ *Bach-Dokumente* II, no. 584 (translated in *The New Bach Reader*, no. 266).

³⁸ See Fröde, 'Zu einer Kritik des Thomanerchores von 1749', 53.

³⁹ See especially *Bach-Dokumente* I, 82–91 and 95–106, as well as *Bach-Dokumente* II, nos. 382 and 383 (translated in *The New Bach Reader*, nos. 181–6 and 192–6).

⁴⁰ See *Bach-Dokumente* II, no. 439 (translated in *The New Bach Reader*, no. 208), and Michael Maul, 'Johann Adolph Scheibes Bach-Kritik: Hintergründe und Schauplätze einer musikalischen Kontroverse', *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 96 (2010), 153–98, especially 180–5; *Bach-Dokumente* I, no. 41 (translated in *The New Bach Reader*, no. 195).

⁴¹ See Christoph Wolff, 'Probleme und Neuansätze der Bach-Biographik', in Reinhold Brinkmann (ed.), *Bachforschung und Bachinterpretation heute, Wissenschaftler und Praktiker im Dialog, Bericht über das Bachfest-Symposium 1978 der Philipps-Universität Marburg* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1981), 21–31, specifically 29 and 31.

which he viewed as hostile to music and which had been adopted by the 'authorities which acted strangely and had little devotion to music' ('wunderlichen und der Music wenig ergebenen Obrigkeit') in the very 'station' that had once been described to him as 'favourable';⁴² or he suffered from bad health, but there is no indication that this was the case. It is unclear, however, whether Bach could have taken such liberties without official approval, and to what extent a 'composer at the electoral court' ('kurfürstlicher Hofcompositeur')—since 1736 in Bach's case—would be protected by his sovereign in the case of an emergency. After all, when Bach had requested protection regarding the Prefects' Dispute immediately after being awarded the court title, the electoral authorities declared they had no jurisdiction in this matter.⁴³

It is also conceivable that a kind of substitute cantor—regardless of whether Fleckeisen was an isolated case or not—could have been appointed, albeit not by Bach himself, but by the Leipzig council, specifically by the director of the Thomasschule, Christian Ludwig Stieglitz. The phrase 'having to perform and direct' ('aufführen und dirigiren müssen') which Fleckeisen used in the application letter for Döbeln, seems to imply that he did so because he was carrying out a specific order. And why did he not explicitly refer to Bach? Did he and the cantor not maintain good relations, and could this explain why there is no evidence of Fleckeisen copying any of Bach's late performing materials? Could it possibly also clarify why in 1747 Fleckeisen refrained from naming the Thomaskantor—who was still alive at the time—as a referee in his application letter for Leisnig and from embarrassing Bach with similar comments four years later (and perhaps also in order not to waste the opportunity of being issued a favourable letter of reference by the Thomaskantor, if such a request were made)?

These at first seemingly far-fetched rationales for the backdrop to Fleckeisen's statements become more plausible when considering Johann Friedrich Köhler's well-known report about the long-term consequences of the Prefects' Dispute, included in his handwritten *Historia Scholarum Lipsiensium* (after 1776). Drawing from an evidently reliable source, he reported the following:

With Ernesti Bach fell out completely. The occasion was the following: Ernesti removed general prefect Krause because he had chastised one of the younger students too vigorously, expelled him from the school when he fled and chose another student in his place as general prefect—a prerogative that really belongs to the cantor, whom the general prefect has to represent. Because the student chosen was of no use in the performance of the church music, Bach made a different choice. The situation between Bach and Ernesti developed to the point of charge and countercharge, and the two men from that time on were enemies. Bach began to hate those students who devoted themselves completely to the *humaniora* and treated music as a secondary matter, and Ernesti became a foe of music. When he came upon a student

⁴² Quotations are taken from Bach's letter to his old school mate Georg Erdmann from 28 October 1730, in *Bach-Dokumente* I, no. 23 (translation in *The New Bach Reader*, no. 152). A detailed description of the new school policy—which becomes evident in the revised school regulations (1723) especially—is provided by Maul, 'Dero berühmter Chor', 167ff.

⁴³ *Bach-Dokumente* I, no. 41 (translation in *The New Bach Reader*, no. 195).

who was practising on an instrument, he would exclaim: What? You want to become a beer-fiddler, too? By virtue of the high regard in which he was held by the Burgomaster, Stieglitz, he managed to be released from the duties of the special inspection of the school [dormitories]⁴⁴ and to have them assigned to the fourth colleague. Thus, when it was Bach's turn to undertake the inspection, he cited the precedent of Ernesti and came to neither table nor prayers; and this neglect had the worst influence on the moral training of the students. From that time on, though there have been several incumbents of the post, little harmony has been observed between the rector and the cantor.

Mit Ernesti zerfiel er [Bach] ganz. Die Veranlassung war diese: Ernesti entsetzte den Generalpräfecten Krause, der einen unteren Schüler zu nachdrücklich gezüchtigt hatte, verwies ihn, da er entwichen war, von der Schule, und wählte an dessen Stelle einen andern Schüler zum Generalpräfect, – ein Recht, das eigentlich dem Cantor zukommt, dessen Stelle der Generalpräfect vertreten muß. Weil das gewählte Subject zur Aufführung der Kirchenmusik untauglich war, traf Bach eine andere Wahl. Daraufhin kam es zwischen Bach und Ernesti zur Klage, und beide wurden seit der Zeit Feinde. Bach fing nun an die Schüler zu hassen, die sich ganz auf Humaniora legten und die Musik nur als ein Nebenwerk trieben und Ernesti ward Feind der Musik. Traf er einen Schüler, der sich auf einem Instrumente übte, so hieß es: Wollt ihr auch ein Bierfiedler werden? – Er brachte es durch sein Ansehen bey dem Bürgermeister Stiegliz dahin, daß ihm (wie seinem Vorgänger Gesner) die besondere Schulinspection erlassen und dem vierten Collegen übertragen wurde. Traf nun die Reihe der Inspection den Cantor Bach, so berief sich dieser auf Ernesti, kam weder zu Tische noch zu Gebet, und diese Vernachlässigung hatte den widrigsten Einfluß auf die sittliche Bildung der Schüler. Seit der Zeit hat man, auch bey wiederholter Besetzung beyder Stellen, wenig Harmonie zwischen Rector und Cantor bemerkt.⁴⁵

The second major conflict between Ernesti and Bach, as described by Köhler, had erupted when Ernesti was officially released from his duty to inspect the Thomasschule – this involved supervising the alumni at meals, during church services in the week and at night, with the four highest-ranking teachers (principal, vice-principal, cantor and *Tertius*) alternating weekly. Even though this conflict was not documented in the town or school archives, it is possible to explain the context by taking a detailed look at the so-called 'Sinner's Legat'. Regina Maria Sinner, the widow of a Leipzig lawyer, had died in November 1740 and specified in her last will that the Thomasschule was to receive 5000 Thaler – this was by far the largest one-off bequest made during the eighteenth century to benefit the school. According to the testament which Frau Sinner had drafted only three days prior to her death, 60 Thaler of the annual interest generated by the bequest should benefit external students who could 'not understand [i.e. were

⁴⁴ Gesner was, in fact, off the hook while the school was renovated (1731/2). It was, however, mentioned explicitly in Ernesti's employment contract as a task to be carried out by the rector (since the renovations were finished).

⁴⁵ German original quoted from *Bach-Dokumente* III, no. 820 (translation based on *The New Bach Reader*, no. 180).

not skilled in] music' ('keine Music verstehen'). Another 60 Thaler were to be distributed as book prizes amongst selected alumni or external students, but were not to be given to those who 'are only skilled in the kind of music which, according to enquiries, comes with enough [financial] benefits' ('so nur allein der Music obliegen, als welche eingezogener Erkundigung nach sonst mit genugsamen Beneficiis versehen sind'). According to the will of the benefactor, the remaining interest was to be divided between the rector, who received 20 Thaler, and the *Quartus*, who got 25 Thaler; the other teachers were to receive 10 Thaler each. The high amount given to the *Quartus* had been justified by Frau Sinner as follows: 'After being told, too, that the colleague who is called *Quartus* has to carry out the inspection of the school [dormitories], but does not enjoy any [pay], he is to have 25 Thaler annually for it' ('Nachdem auch vernommen, daß von denen Collegen, der der Quartus genennet wird, die Inspection auf der Schule mit hat, dafür er doch nichts genießet, so soll er 25 Thlr. dafür jährlich bekommen').⁴⁶

The benefactress was most probably provided with relevant background information by either rector Ernesti, or the director [of the school], Stieglitz, or his successor, Privy Councillor Carl Friedrich Trier (director of the school as of January 1742, at the express request of Stieglitz).⁴⁷ Her relationship with Trier was especially close: he was her sole heir. Her detailed instructions—which she would hardly have thought up all by herself—certainly played into Rector Ernesti's hands in more ways than one. The foundation was aimed particularly at external students, rather than at 'musically skilled' ('[der] Music obliegende') alumni; this was a welcome validation of Ernesti's own agenda. Moreover, the fact that the *Quartus* would suddenly—as if by 'divine intervention'—receive a significant 'remuneration' for taking over the rector's inspection duties, provided a solid financial and, above all, permanent basis for Ernesti's release from this unpopular task (which could have occurred only shortly before), and made discussions regarding the rector's new privilege superfluous.

Five years after the 'Prefects' Dispute' (in which the town council had evidently refrained from returning a final verdict), Bach must have viewed the clever 'financing scheme' conceived by Ernesti, Stieglitz and Trier, regarding the transfer of school inspection duties from rector to *Quartus*, as another personal defeat at the hands of Ernesti, and the rector being granted preference as an injustice. It is easily understandable why Bach reacted to the change in the manner that Köhler had described and, as during the 'Prefects' Dispute', ostentatiously insisted on equality of rank, admittedly without enjoying the support of the directors of the school. Granted, it is impossible to determine whether Bach had gone too far in his stubbornness, what exactly the 'worst influence on the moral training of the students' entailed, and how all of this

⁴⁶ The wording of the testament is provided by Stefan Altner, 'Wiedergefundene Legat-Quittungsbücher und Matrikelverzeichnisse der Leipziger Thomasschule, die auch die Bach-Zeit berühren', *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 86 (2000), 119–37, specifically 125–6; see also *ibid.*, 121–3; Hans-Joachim Schulze, 'Marginalien zu einigen Bach-Dokumenten', *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 48 (1961), 79–99, specifically 92f., and Maul, 'Dero berühmter Chor', 256f.

⁴⁷ Election minutes, Stadtarchiv Leipzig, *Tit. VIII*, no. 44, fol. 169f.

would shape the Thomaskantor's future. But it appears that Ernesti did not share the terms of Frau Sinner's bequest with the entire teaching staff until the autumn of 1741.⁴⁸ Consequently, Bach's refusal to continue carrying out his inspection duties could, in fact, have occurred at that time – which would also have been around the time when Fleckeisen took over the job of prefect, i.e. during his last two years of schooling.

That the conflict between Bach and Ernesti had worsened was largely due to the fact that in the interim the rector, who was 27 years Bach's junior, had been able – unlike Bach – to secure the proverbial ear of the town council, specifically Stieglitz, the chief decision maker in all things connected with the Thomasschule: as a university student Ernesti had tutored Stieglitz's children and served as his private secretary. In 1731 it was Stieglitz who had recommended the merely twenty-four-year-old *Magister* for the post of vice-rector at the Thomasschule; three years later he presented Ernest to his fellow council members as the ideal successor of the outgoing rector Gesner because he had 'introduced and maintained a good discipline' ('eine gute Disciplin eingeführet und erhalten').⁴⁹ By then (in 1741) Stieglitz had become one of the three Leipzig burgomasters, and he continued to support, to the best of his abilities, Ernesti's plan of raising the profile of St Thomas as a 'university preparatory school' ('Gelehrtenschule') and of increasingly undermining its traditional focus on musical education (without – and that was the main dilemma in all discourses brought about by the *Zeitgeist* of the Enlightenment – allowing a reduction in the high number of the requisite vocal performances ('Singedienste'), as the funds raised on these occasions would establish the unusually high annual wages of the higher ranked teachers).

That Bach himself indeed viewed the close relationship between Ernesti and Stieglitz (and probably later also with Trier) as the root of his problems at the Thomasschule is confirmed in an unexpected place: the 'XVIII. Hauptstück' of Johann Joachim Quantz's treatise on flute playing. Regarding the decline of school choirs in the middle of the eighteenth century, which could be observed in many places, and the comparatively less than artistic 'manner of singing' ('Singart') to be encountered there, he writes initially:

The cantors, because of the school duties bound up with their position, are also supposed to be partly scholars. Hence, in choosing them, more attention is often paid to the latter prerequisite than to their knowledge of music. The cantors chosen in accordance with such views deal with music, about which they really know very little, as a purely secondary matter. ... Even if a cantor is found here and there who understands his duties, and wants to administer his musical office honestly, at many places the authorities of the school ... seek to hinder the cantor as well as the students from the practice of music.

Die Cantores sollen, wegen der mit ihrem Amte immer verknüpften Schularbeiten, zugleich halbe Gelehrte seyn. Deswegen wird öfters bey der

⁴⁸ See Altner, 'Wiedergefundene Legat-Quittungsbücher', 122 and 126, as well as *Bach-Dokumente* V, A122a.

⁴⁹ Quotations taken from council minutes; citations of archival sources provided by Maul, '*Dero berühmter Chor*', 242–3.

Wahl mehr auf das letztere, als auf die Wissenschaft in der Musik gesehen. Die nach solchen Absichten erwählten Cantores treiben deswegen die Musik, von der sie ohnedem sehr wenig wissen, nur als ein Nebenwerk. ... Findet sich auch ja noch hier und da ein Cantor, der das Seinige versteht, und seinem musikalischen Amte rechtschaffen vorzustehen Lust hat: so suchen an vielen Orten die Obersten der Schule ... sowohl den Cantor, als die Schüler, an Ausübung der Musik zu hindern.⁵⁰

Next, the author, Quantz, comments on specific obstacles in these particular 'music schools'. Judging from the above examination, they should be regarded as direct references to the conditions at Leipzig's Thomasschule:

And even in those schools which, as their laws attest, have been established principally with the aim that music should be taught and learned exquisitely, and *musici eruditi* should be trained, the rector supported by the director is often the most open enemy of music. Just as if being a good Latin scholar and a good musician were necessarily mutually exclusive skill sets.

Auch sogar in denen Schulen, welche, besage ihrer Gesetze, hauptsächlich in der Absicht gestiftet worden sind, daß die Musik darinne vorzüglich soll gelehret und gelernt, und *musici eruditi* gezogen werden, ist öfters der durch den Vorsteher unterstützte Rector der abgesagteste Feind der Musik. Gerade als wenn ein guter Lateiner und ein guter Musikus Dinge wären, deren eines das andere nothwendiger Weise aufhebt.

Bach could certainly have seized the opportunity to tell his colleague Quantz about the whole Leipzig dilemma (perhaps during his visits to Berlin in 1741 and 1747). But it is even more likely that the Berlin court composer Johann Friedrich Agricola, as Quantz's probable ghost writer, had shared his intimate knowledge of the situation with Quantz.⁵¹ As a private student of Bach between 1738 and 1741, Agricola had also experienced first-hand the situation he described.⁵²

Let us now return to the 'Fleckeisen case': the situation at the Thomasschule during the 1740s – most of the extant archival materials pertain to the first half of that decade – was obviously muddled, having been shaped by turf wars and by the aggressive behaviour of the protagonists. These could indeed have progressed to a point where Bach, having exhausted the patience and tolerance of his superiors, decided to stop being active in the choir lofts on Sundays, and possibly even (at times) to withdraw completely – either as a reaction to Ernesti's more or less arbitrary decision to resign from his school inspection duties, or in

⁵⁰ German original in Johann Joachim Quantz, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversière zu spielen*, Berlin, 1752 (reprint Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1983), 326. English translation based on Johann Joachim Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, trans. Edward J. Reilly (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2001), 336–7.

⁵¹ See *Bach-Dokumente* III, no. 651K.

⁵² That this passage could refer to the conditions at the Thomasschule and Agricola as a possible informant was already pointed out by Hans-Joachim Schulze; see his article 'Das didaktische Modell der Thomaner im Spiegel der deutschen Musikpädagogik des 18. Jahrhunderts', in Hartmut Krones (ed.), *Alte Musik und Musikpädagogik*, Wiener Schriften zur Stilkunde und Aufführungspraxis, 1 (Vienna: Böhlau, 1997), 185–98, specifically 197–8.

general as a response to his superiors' open or secret attempts to lessen the significance of music making in the classroom and boarding school. On the other hand, it is also conceivable—and possible to bring in line with information provided in extant documents—that the rector and the director of the school had at one point agreed to 'kill Bach off' and appoint an experienced (former?) prefect as the regular director of church music, possibly as a reaction to Bach's stubbornness and his earlier refusal to communicate arbitrary exemptions from work duties to his superiors.⁵³ The fact that extant sources do not provide any evidence to that effect—remembering that staying away from the choir loft was a violation of Bach's duties as per his employment contract,⁵⁴ and could therefore have been penalised—does not mean that it could not have happened in the way that Fleckeisen had suggested. Many a town councillor would surely have considered it more practical to solve the problem of the 'unruly' cantor, Capellmeister and 'court composer' ('HofCompositeur') as quietly and quickly as possible and by sitting the whole thing out somehow—his death was surely imminent—instead of getting involved in a lengthy legal dispute; at the time it was rare to remove school staff from office, even in cases of gross violations, and it always involved legal proceedings moving through various courts. This also casts new light on the rather tasteless course of action taken by the Leipzig town council concerning Minister Brühl's demand to have Gottlob Harrer audition in 1749.

Neither a thorough examination of Fleckeisen's application letter for Döbeln nor an in-depth discussion of its context allow us to identify with certainty the two years which the Thomaskantor had taken off (1742/3 or sometime between 1743 and 1746) and to determine whether the 'Fleckeisen case' was a special case,⁵⁵ nor how it had come about or to what extent Bach had effectively resigned from his tasks as organist and director of church music (perhaps 'two whole years' only on 'regular' Sundays). But it is not difficult to reconcile the primary source's key message with the lack of new church music in the 1740s, specifically the absence of putative but never composed cantata cycles by Bach and the very few specific references to repeat performances of his older works. This emphasises the importance of the legacy works (*Vermächtniswerke*) which the elderly composer had, in fact, committed to paper as part of his daily routine—a far cry from his duties as Thomaskantor.

Consequently, we must assume that Bach's understanding of his post during his later years as cantor had changed fundamentally, and with it his artistic requirements regarding performances at church: the high level of motivation evident in his early Leipzig works had been replaced by a rather cool pragmatism, at times even a disinterest. This is possibly also reflected in a detail

⁵³ Cf. *Bach-Dokumente* II, no. 280 (translation in *The New Bach Reader*, no. 150a).

⁵⁴ See *Bach-Dokumente* I, 177–8 (translation in *The New Bach Reader*, no. 100).

⁵⁵ The curious discrepancies regarding the enrolment and graduation dates of the first prefect Christian Beck, whom Ernesti held in high regard (he stayed at the school until 1741/3; see notes 16 and 19), could also be explained by Beck having replaced Bach on the choir lofts over a longer period of time. But as certain details in the dates are difficult to decipher and interpret, one must not jump to conclusions.

provided elsewhere: according to Ernesti's description of the 'Prefects' Dispute' – an account that can certainly be considered reliable – it was common practice until 1736 that 'the first prefect never conducts [the main music]' ('der erste Praefectus niemals [die Hauptmusik] dirigiret'); instead, Bach got the music director of the Neukirche to substitute for him.⁵⁶ Evidence shows that only prefects active in the late 1730s and 1740s chose vague language to describe their roles as not only head of the *chorus musicus* (in the motets), but also as substitute director of the actual church 'music' (whenever Bach was away)⁵⁷ – perhaps because of a falling out between Gerlach and Bach that I have described elsewhere; this would have happened around 1738 and could have damaged the musicians' relationship beyond repair (and would certainly have had a negative impact on Bach's relationship with the *collegium musicum*).⁵⁸

There is no doubt, however, that an examination of Fleckeisen's application letter elucidates a comment made by Burgomaster Born on the occasion of Johann Friedrich Doles' election for the Thomaskantorat in 1755. He was 'of the opinion that the previous [administrative] approach to the cantorate should be taken, i.e. that of Herr Kuhnau, and that the new [cantor] should watch over both music and teaching, which had been in a state of disarray under Herr Bach' ('der Meinung daß das Cantorat auf vorigen Fuß, wie bey Herrn Kunauen gesetzt werde und der neüe [Kantor] sowohl die Music als auch die Information beobachte, immaßen bey Herrn Bachen viele Desordres vorgegangen').⁵⁹

Translated by Barbara M. Reul

⁵⁶ *Bach-Dokumente* II, nos. 382–3 (translation in *The New Bach Reader*, nos. 184 and 186).

⁵⁷ In addition to Fleckeisen this applies to Johann Nathaniel Bammler, of whom Bach himself had claimed in 1749 – apparently on the occasion of Bammler's application for the 'Hammschersche' Stipend – that he could be 'fully entrust[ed] with the prefect's office for the choirs, as he directed the school music of the second choir for three years and, for his last year in school, likewise served as prefect of the first choir, too, and conducted not only the motets but also, in my absence, the entire church music' ('mit gutem fug die Praefecturen der Chöre anvertrauen können, wie er denn in die 3. Jahre die Direction der Kirchen Musique des andern Chores verwaltet, auch das letzte Jahr seines Schullebens im ersten Chore gleichermaßen die Praefectur gehabt, und sowohl die Motetten als auch in Abwesenheit meiner die völlige Kirchen Musique dirigirt hat'); see Wollny, note 30, 37–44; as well as *Bach-Dokumente* V, A82b (translation taken from *The New Bach Reader*, no. 264). Four years later Bammler turned this report into a flowery couplet on the occasion of his (unsuccessful) application written in verse for the cantorate in Schneeberg: 'Since a Bach himself did not consider me unskilled, he entrusted me with the music and choir for three years.' ('Da mich auch selbst ein Bach nicht ungeschickt geschaut, der mir drey Jahre lang Musik und Chor vertraut.') Stadtarchiv Schneeberg, no. 3062: 'Acta Die Ersezung die vacirende Stelle des Cantoris alhier betr. Anno 1682 1696 1697 1747 1753', fols.154r–155r; preprint in *Bach-Dokumente* V, C656a. Of course, this really seems to refer to Bammler's directorship of the second choir, which Bach had indeed confirmed as going on 'in die drei Jahre' (literally 'going into the third year').

⁵⁸ See Maul, 'Johann Adolph Scheibes Bach-Kritik', 180–5.

⁵⁹ *Bach-Dokumente* III, no. 671.

483
 Ego Gottfried Benjamin Fleckeisen, natus
 1719. d. 19 Februar: Doebeln patre Gott-
 fried Fleckeisen Cantore. Receptus sum
 in contubernium Thomanum anno 1732.
 d. 9 Octobr: patrocinio magnifici Se-
 natus pollicitus tum reliqua in for-
 mula obligationis expressa tum man-
 surum me in contubernio annos $7\frac{1}{2}$.
 adscriptus tum eram classi tertia.
 Hoc vero scripsi. d. 9 Octobr: 1732.
 E
 Dimissus a. 1746.

Figure 1: Entry by Gottfried Benjamin Fleckeisen in the enrolment registers of the Thomasschule, 9 October 1732, 'Album Alumnorum Thomanorum', Stadtarchiv Leipzig, 'Thomasschule', no. 483, fol. 36v. Used with permission.

Ich bin ein unglücklicher Mensch, der sich durch die Wohlthaten, so Ew. Hochwohlged. und Hochwohlw. in die 51. Jahr theillich, theillich seinen Kindern zuwenden haben. Ich hätte mir ein solches Vater & Sohn können studieren lassen? wenn nicht dieselben, ihn, als Lebrer Vater dieser Stadt, auf die großmüthig, so hat die größten Beneficia, und Stipendia, von seiner Wohlthat angewandt lassen. Was mich anbelangt, so bin ich 9. Jahr auf der Thomas Schule in Leipzig als Alumnus gewesen, und habe dazwischen 4. Jahr als Praefectus dem Choro musico vorgestanden. Zwei ganzen Jahr habe die Music in dem Döbeln Kirchen zu S. Thomae, und Nicolai anstatt des Capellmeisters ausgeführt, und dirigieren müssen, und ohne Lügen zu reden, allzeit mit Fleiß bestanden. fünf Jahr bin ich in Leipzig auf der Universität gewesen, und habe beständig dieselbe zu studieren miinert studieren lassen, damit ich Gott, und dem Vaterland, in einem Schuler, nach meinem vorliegenden Talent dienen könnte. Da nun Ew. Hochwohlged. und Hochwohlw. nicht

Figures 2-3. Gottfried Benjamin Fleckeisen, application letter for the Döbeln cantorate, 27 February 1751, 'Acta des Cantorats nach Absterben Herrn Gottfried Fleckeisens zu Döbeln betr. Anno 1751', Pfarrarchiv Döbeln, H 2934, fols. 5v-6r. Used with permission.

mir meinem übrigen Dringen Ländern, sondern auch be-
 sondern mir, auf der Universität der größten Wohlthaten,
 nicht wäntlich, und lieblich erzogen haben, und ich
 Venenselben, also mit gemisster Maist angehöret; so
 habe auch bey dieser Gelegenheit meine Monigheit Venen-
 selben nicht bestand zuzugestehen, im desto erwieyert
 Zustand nehmen können. Daraus hergehet zu unser
 Hochzuehrende Herren, und hohe Patroni, mir gaher
 samstet Bittten, mich an die Stelle meines seligen Vaters
 zusetzen. Dergleichen, doch mir noch einmal Gropstun-
 thig, und lieblich gegen mich, und gegen die Zinsverlester,
 in Trostlos, Frau Wittber, und Kinder. Diese letzten 111:
 Hochwohl edl. und Hochwohl weis. mit 2 Jahren Bittten,
 dich doch über dieselben zuzubringen. Durch diese einzige
 Wohlthat werden dieselben, mir ganze Familie bey
 Wohlthun erhalten. Mit demselben wolten mir nicht
 seyn! ganz Dankbar selte davon zuzusetzen haben, mir viel
 Güter mir von Vero Tänden zuzusetzen. Ich verhoffe in der
 göttlichen Luststand, nach Gerechtung meiner Bitt, die mich mich
 gaher zuzusetzen, so zu erfüllen, damit dieselben mit mir
 zuzusetzen seyn werden, und ich werde Frau Hochwohl edl.
 und Hochwohl weis. unschätzbar Güter, mit allen Ehrentitel,
 und gaher samstet zuzusetzen, mit lobend zu zuzusetzen
 erwidern, alle,

Fr: Hochwohl edlen, und Hochwohl weisen
 Meinem Wohlzuehrenden Herren, und
 Wohlthun Patronen,

Dordulu den
 27 Febr:
 1751.

verbunden von
 Gottfried Benjamin Schenk

Figure 3