

CHRISTIAN HYMN WRITERS

COME ALIVE III

by Mayrene Bobbitt



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**CHRISTIAN HYMN
WRITERS COME ALIVE III**

By Mayrene Bobbitt

***To Paul Bobbitt,
my partner in life and ministry.***

FOREWORD

In this post-Gutenberg age where the spoken and enacted word seems for many folk to have greater appeal than the printed word, Mayrene Bobbitt has performed an effective ministry with her dramatic monologs.

Those who have been fortunate enough to have heard and seen Mayrene enact her characters from hymnic and church music history have experienced those characters in fresh and meaningful ways. For others, her carefully crafted minidramas have served as scripts for presentations in worship services, choir retreats and church music conferences.

Now, in this her third volume, Mayrene gives us five more imaginative reconstructions based on anecdotal evidence from reliable sources. Bach, Handel, Wesley and others will virtually leap to life for those who will make creative use of these dramatizations.

Thus, the hymns associated with these historical figures will have greater significance and can then be sung with increased appreciation and renewed fervour.

May it be so!

Hugh T. McElrath

V. V. Cooke Professor of Church Music
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
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PRODUCTION NOTES

George Frederick Handel: The Servant of Scene I is speaking to the unseen Countess of Huntingdon. In Scene II Countess Huntingdon is speaking to the same Servant from Scene I. The same woman could portray both persons with a complete change of costume, voice, expression and demeanor. The Servant could be either male or female and of any age. The domestic servant's costume of the eighteenth century should be plain and dark: long full skirt with peasant blouse accented with white apron and mop hat for the woman, knee britches and long stockings for the man. A cockney accent well done could enhance this character. The Countess was married to an Earl, giving her a very high station in the royal court, so her costume could be elaborate. The bearing and speech of this Lady should be aristocratic, almost regal. It is a historical fact that she was a friend of Handel's and was called to his death bed. The Countess could be seen in Scene I as the Servant speaks and this Servant could also be seen in Scene II, but they should sit or stand quietly, giving the speaker rapt attention, so as not to detract from the monolog. The setting for each scene is the parlor of an eighteenth-century lodging house in London. The furnishings of the room can be as detailed or sparse as you desire. The exact words of Handel are used in Scene I: "I did think I did see all heaven before me and the great God himself!" and in Scene II: "I have now done with the world" so these should be quoted correctly. There is an abundance of Handel music available which could be used as prelude, postlude and between the scenes. This could be taped in advance or performed by your own choir and instrumentalists. Especially appropriate after Scene I would be the "Hallelujah Chorus" from *The Messiah* beginning with the phrase "The kingdoms of this world are become . . ." which the Servant has quoted. If the actress playing Countess Huntingdon is a vocalist, she could sing "I Know That My Redeemer Liveth" from *The Messiah* at the end of her monolog. A choir could sing part or all of "Worthy Is the Lamb That Was Slain." Two Handel tunes are widely used with Christmas carols: "Antioch" the tune for "Joy To the World," "Christmas" used with "While Shepherds Watch Their Flocks by Night." The hymn "Awake, My Soul, Stretch Every Nerve" by Phillip Doddridge is also sung to the tune "Christmas." The popularity of *The Messiah* at Christmas and Easter would make this a most usable drama during these seasons.

Johann Sebastian Bach: The premise of this monolog is that a musicologist has come to Germany seeking information about the famous composer and interviews his cousin. This lady was a real cousin named Barbara Catharina Bach who witnessed the fight at Arnstadt with the “Nanny-goat bassoonist” whose name was Geyersbach. She was actually called to testify before the town council. Bach was rebuked at Arnstadt for allowing a “strange maiden” to perform music in the church, but it is not fact that it was this same cousin. The drama does imply that the cousin is middle-aged or older as she was near to Bach’s age and he has already died. A German “native” costume would enhance this character. This could be accomplished with a colorful full skirt, a sleeveless jerkin over peasant blouse and matching kerchief for the head. The piece could be spoken with a German accent. No furnishings are needed for background so the costuming is important in presenting a German setting. As with Handel, there are many Bach compositions both vocal and instrumental which could be used with this presentation. His most popular hymn setting is “Passion Chorale” used for the hymn text “O Sacred Head, Now Wounded” and found in most denominational hymnals. Other usable congregational hymn tunes by Bach include: “Herr Jesu Christ” a setting for “All Things Are Thine” by John C. Whittier; “Darmstadt” and “Rinkart” both used for “Christ Is the World’s True Light” by George W. Briggs; “Ermuntre Dich” tune for Christmas Chorale “Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light” by John Troutbeck.

Charles Wesley: The character of Countess Huntingdon who presents the Charles Wesley story is the same person as in Scene II of the drama on George Frederick Handel. She was a personal friend of Handel, Isaac Watts, both Wesley brothers and their associate, George Whitefield, as well as many other prominent Englishmen of her era. The same person and costume from the Handel drama could be used. She is dressed in rather an elaborate costume, hat and hair style of the eighteenth century as befitting the station of Countess, wife of an Earl. She could be of any age. Lady Huntingdon enters the stage during the congregational singing of the hymn, “O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing.” She appears puzzled and looks around at the audience in wonder, amazement and amusement at the twentieth-century environment in which she finds herself. It is as if she has suddenly been transported from the past. If this drama is given in a church auditorium, the Countess could enter from the rear of the audience and stare bewilderingly at the people as she

walks slowly down the aisle. She arrives at the front chancel area as the hymn concludes and speaks directly to the audience. An additional element of humor could be added when addressing Baptist, Presbyterian or Congregational churches by inserting the following dialog after the second paragraph:

No? (*Name their denomination*)? **You say that you are** (*Name their denomination*)?

Yes, I do recall a small group from my time in England who were known as (*Name their denomination*). **They were that strict Calvinist group who taught that only the elect could be saved. I remember how they could come to the Wesley meetings to ridicule. They led picket lines around the fringes of the crowd to disrupt the meetings!**

Now, don't get your dander up; I did not come to criticize (*Name their denomination*).

Then continue with the phrase: "I was very near you in doctrine myself. . . ." The hymn text suggested for ending the monolog are unpublished stanzas from "O for a Thousand Tonuges to Sing," which originally contained some 24 stanzas. *The Methodist Hymnal* contains more of these stanzas than other hymnals. Every Methodist hymn book has traditionally used this as the first hymn. Every major denominational hymnal contains many Charles Wesley hymns which could be used with this program. *The Methodist Hymnal* contains more than any other. Other well known Wesley hymns include: "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today," "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing," "Hail, Thou Long-expected Jesus," "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling," "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," "Rejoice, the Lord Is King," "Soldiers of Christ, Arise," "A Charge to Keep I Have," "Gentle Jesus, Meek and Mild," "Lo He Comes With Clouds Descending," "Depth of Mercy! Can There Be," and "Amazing Love and Can It Be." Some of John Wesley's best known hymns could also be included: "Give to the Winds Your Fears," "Jesus, Thy Boundless Love to Me," and "O Thou to Whose All-searching Sight." A grandson of Charles Wesley was Samuel Sebastian Wesley who was the composer of the well known hymn tune: "Aurelia" used with the popular hymn "The Church's One Foundation." This hymn could be included in a Wesley family program.

Philip Bliss: The “maid” who presents this monolog could also be a male servant. The servant can be of any age, dressed in a domestic servant’s costume of the nineteenth century: dark clothing, plain, and, if a woman, a long skirt with white apron and mop hat. The prop needed would be an old-fashioned piece of luggage, a “carpetbag,” that contains several items: papers, Bible, photograph of a woman in old-fashioned dress, music books and old hymnals. The luggage is placed on a table which stands at Centerstage. The servant stands behind this table and faces the audience while speaking. The servant is in awe and grief at the task of unpacking the belongings of his beloved master. He lovingly and slowly displays each item to the unseen Mrs. Whittle. After the words: “No, we haven’t heard any more about how it happened. Only what we’ve read in the newspapers,” the servant could take a newspaper clipping from his pocket and read the account of the train wreck. The drama is based on the fact that this hymn text of Philip Bliss was actually found with his belongings after his death. The words of “I Will Sing of My Redeemer” should be read slowly and expressively, but as though the words are truly unfamiliar to the reader. The unseen voice at the conclusion should be a male as this represents the influence of Philip Bliss being felt at the Moody Tabernacle, even after death. The singing should be unaccompanied, sung at a slower tempo than a congregation might sing. The congregation could be invited to sing the remainder of the hymn as a closing. Philip Bliss usually wrote both words and music for his hymns. “I Will Sing of My Redeemer” is the only one for which he wrote only the words. There are two popular hymns for which he wrote only the music: “Kenosis,” the setting for Frances Havergal’s text, “I Gave My Life for Thee.” *Christian Hymn Writers Come Alive II* contains a portrayal of Frances Havergal which could be presented in connection with this one featuring their joint hymn. Miss Havergal was from England and probably never met Mr. Bliss. “Ville Due Havre” tune was written for Horatio Spafford’s moving text, “When Peace Like a River (It Is Well With My Soul).” Other Philip Bliss hymns which could be used with this presentation are: “Almost Persuaded,” “Let the Lower Lights Be Burning,” “Free From the Law, O Happy Condition (Once for All),” “I Am So Glad That Our Father in Heaven (Jesus Loves Even Me),” “Man of Sorrows, What a Name,” “More Holiness Give Me,” “Sing Them Over Again to Me (Wonderful Words of Life),” and “The Whole World Was Lost in the Darkness of Sin (The Light of the Word Is Jesus).”

Joseph Mohr (“Silent Night, Holy Night”): Father Joseph Mohr is 26 years old at the time of the drama. He is dressed in a long black robe with clerical collar. If desired, a dark suit with clerical collar could be substituted for the robe, although Catholic priests of the early 1800’s probably did wear robes. This is the only known hymn written by Joseph Mohr or Franz Gruber, but it does have the reputation of being the best loved and best known Christmas carol. This is the shortest monolog in this volume. It can be performed in about five minutes, which makes it most usable. It could be incorporated in Advent season worship services, concerts or social events. If the monolog is presented in a church auditorium, the actor could stand in front of or beside the organ console as he speaks about the problem of the broken organ. A German accent could enhance the performance. If the monologist plays the guitar or can sing, he could perform the hymn at the conclusion. The person of Franz Gruber (in German costume) could join Mohr on stage and play the guitar as the two sing the duet. The congregation could join in singing the last stanza at the closing. An added effect would be to have the hymn sung in German.

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The Story of "Silent Night, Holy Night"

1 **Story of The Messiah Composer:**
 2 **George Frederick Handel**

3
 4 **SCENE I**

5
 6 **TIME:** 1741

7 **PLACE:** The parlor of a lodging house in London, England.

8 **ATRISE:** Enter a SERVANT. (*The SERVANT may be either a male*
 9 *or female, dressed in domestic servant's costume of the eighteenth*
 10 *century.*)

11
 12 **SERVANT:** Oh, your ladyship, you grace our humble dwelling
 13 by your presence. You are truly the Countess of Huntingdon?
 14 (*In awe*) Herself? Oh, Madam, how honored we are that
 15 you have come in person to inquire about Mr. George
 16 Frederick Handel!

17 When we sent word to Mr. Handel's friends that
 18 someone should surely come here and check on his
 19 condition, I had no hope that such an esteemed Christian
 20 leader as yourself would respond. But, I should have
 21 known that you would, Ma'am, always being the soul of
 22 charity and a true generous friend of all in need.

23 And, what do *I* think is wrong with Mr. Handel? Oh,
 24 to be sure, Ma'am, I just don't know! He's been shut up in
 25 his room now for twenty-four days! That's right, almost
 26 a full month!

27 No, he has not come down, not once during all that
 28 time!

29 He forbids anyone to enter the room. We know no
 30 one is with him and yet we hear sounds of moving about,
 31 talking, murmurings, even shoutings, and then strange
 32 long periods of silence. He says that he is writing music,
 33 but no sound of music has been heard. He hasn't come
 34 down to play the new organ which he had installed, nor
 35 have we heard his oboe, which is his favorite instrument.

1 **We are commanded to leave his meals on trays at**
 2 **the door and yet, when we return, the food is untouched.**
 3 **That's right, not one mouthful of nourishment has he had**
 4 **in all this time!**

5 **Has he ever acted this way before?**

6 **No, no, Ma'am, not like this!**

7 **Though sometimes he does act strangely. I always**
 8 **thought the reason was that he was German. Why, we**
 9 **can hardly understand him, though he always speaks**
 10 **rather loudly, but in a blend of German, Italian, and even**
 11 **French. His English is very poor.**

12 **No, Ma'am, I ain't about to try going in that room!**

13 **Mr. Handel is such a large man, large hands, big feet**
 14 **and on his huge head that long white curly wig draping**
 15 **down over his broad shoulders. Why, he could swipe me**
 16 **away with one blow of hand, and he might too, if I were**
 17 **to cross him!**

18 **Did you hear about that soprano that he almost threw**
 19 **out of the opera house window, because she refused to**
 20 **follow his direction?**

21 **Another time two prima donnas, in fits of jealousy,**
 22 **grabbed one another by the hair. It was Mr. Handel who**
 23 **ended the fight by banging upon the kettledrum to drown**
 24 **them out.**

25 **He's mostly been kind and generous to me, but he's**
 26 **an obstinate and determined man, Ma'am. He likes a good**
 27 **fight.**

28 **How can I help, Ma'am?**

29 **No, I never heard anything from him or about him**
 30 **which would account for this insanity!**

31 **He loved his sainted mother who was the daughter**
 32 **of a Lutheran pastor. He speaks so highly of her, saying**
 33 **she was so good and pious.**

34 **Probably his stubbornness comes from his father,**
 35 **who was a surgeon. He told me that his father was**

1 determined that his son would *not* be a musician, but a
2 lawyer. How fortunate that his father's employer heard
3 him play the organ postlude at church when he was only
4 eight years old and insisted that the boy be given every
5 opportunity for music study.

6 He told me of leaving his hometown as a young man
7 for the position of second violinist at the Hamburg opera
8 house, and how later, he left Germany to seek his fortune
9 in Italy. He said that Italy was the center of the world to
10 a musician. I heard that he *did* gain success and an
11 international reputation in Italy. He was given the nick-
12 name "il caro Sassone" which he said meant "the dear
13 Saxon."

14 I know you heard, Ma'am, how his first opera here
15 in London was a great success.

16 Queen Anne herself admired his music. He was the
17 first foreigner allowed to write music for our national
18 celebrations, wasn't he?

19 King George continues his royal subsidy begun by
20 Queen Anne. What an honor when the King himself
21 requested Mr. Handel to write Queen Caroline's funeral
22 music.

23 Has he seemed depressed or despondent?

24 Well, he certainly was when the Academy of Music
25 went bankrupt. He was almost sent to debtor's prison
26 then. But, mostly he was angry! He called the Academy
27 a bunch of amateurs with no professional or business
28 sense. He said that the lavish productions were costing
29 *far more* than the receipts. The Italian style opera
30 appealed only to the upper-class audiences, certainly not
31 to us common folk. Then during Lent every year the
32 theaters had to close down, causing more financial loss.

33 Mr. Handel told me he would overcome all these
34 problems by writing oratorios, biblical stories told in
35 music but not acted out. They could be presented in

1 theaters, even during Lent, without nearly the cost of
2 opera.

3 Yes, Ma'am, I know that you and other leading religious
4 leaders of our country have supported the oratorios,
5 though many are opposed.

6 Mr. Handel has always come out of every adversity
7 with his fighting spirit. Especially, he has always been
8 in control where his music is concerned.

9 Right before he disappeared into that room, he had
10 received a package, which he said was a libretto for his
11 newest oratorio. He said that the words were *all* directly
12 from the Bible. He was excited about this, *not* depressed.

13 Finally, this morning when I took up his tray, he let me
14 into the room for the first time. He was writing frantically.

15 At first he was whispering. I had to lean forward to
16 hear. Then, his voice rose to a shout: "The kingdom of this
17 world . . . is become . . . the kingdom of our Lord and of
18 his Christ, and of his Christ!"

19 Then with tears streaming down his face, he looked
20 up at me and said, "I did think I did see *all* heaven before
21 me, and the great God himself" (*SERVANT pauses in
22 wonder, bows head then walks silently Offstage.*)

23

24 **SCENE II**

25

26 **TIME:** April 14, 1759

27 **PLACE:** The same as Scene I

28 **AT RISE:** Enter SELENA HASTINGS, THE COUNTESS OF
29 HUNTINGDON. (*She is elaborately attired as befitting a
30 countess of England in eighteenth-century dress, hat and hair
31 style.*)

32

33 **COUNTESS:** Thank you, my good woman (*Or man*), for the
34 tea. I'll just sit to rest a moment before returning to Mr.
35 Handel's bedside.

1 **I'm glad that he wanted to see me. We have remained**
2 **good friends since that memorable day. Was it so long**
3 **ago? Eighteen years? That day that you sent for me when**
4 **Mr. Handel was closeted in his room writing what I believe**
5 **will prove to be his greatest masterpiece. Truly, he was**
6 **inspired by God during those days, and yet, when he**
7 **finished it, he stuck it back in some drawer and almost**
8 **forgot it.**

9 **When was it first performed? One year after that,**
10 **1742 in Dublin, Ireland. *The Messiah* was first presented**
11 **at a charity concert. Since that time, Mr. Handel has**
12 **always reserved this oratorio for some worthwhile need.**
13 **He told me that the manuscript of *The Messiah* will be**
14 **left to his favorite charity, the foundling hospital.**
15 **Although Mr. Handel is not married, he has always been**
16 **generous to help widows and orphans, especially of**
17 **musicians.**

18 **How could we have imagined back that day in 1741,**
19 **the magnitude of the music he was writing? Yet, at first,**
20 **his oratorios were misunderstood by church people. I**
21 **suppose because they were performed in theaters. Some**
22 **thought the style of music was "worldly."**

23 **He did tell me once that he got inspiration for some**
24 **of his airs from the street cries of London.**

25 **Even before his first oratorio was ever heard, some**
26 **were calling it the height of profanity that the most**
27 **sacred of words were to be presented in a place most**
28 **often used for light and vain entertainment.**

29 **I remember how many self-righteous women would**
30 **give parties or sponsor conflicting theatrical performances**
31 **on the days when Mr. Handel's concerts were presented,**
32 **in order to rob him of his audience. Sometimes they**
33 **would hire unruly boys to tear down the advertisements**
34 **of his concerts.**

35 **But, he would not change his ideas to please others.**

1 **I believe this was of God, for in spite of the controversy,**
2 **the oratorios thrive.**

3 **Mr. Handel told me that the oratorios gave him an**
4 **idea of heaven, where everybody is to sing, whether they**
5 **have voices or not.**

6 **It distresses me to see him so broken in health. His**
7 **resilience has always brought him back after physical**
8 **and financial collapse, after he suffered the stroke, yes,**
9 **even after a nervous breakdown when his best friends**
10 **thought that he was going insane.**

11 **How thankful I was that the cataract surgery restored**
12 **some of his eyesight. Even though he cannot see to**
13 **compose or conduct, he continues to play. Just eight days**
14 **ago, on April 6, he played for *The Messiah* on the organ**
15 **which he had donated to the foundling hospital.**

16 **In these last ten years he has made a great deal of**
17 **money. He shared with me that it will all be left to his**
18 **friends and charities: especially the foundling hospital**
19 **and to support the aging musicians.**

20 **Mr Handel sometimes led himself into disaster, but**
21 **then was able to rise above it by his own toughness and**
22 **tenacity, and most of all by his character and deep faith**
23 **in God.**

24 **I believe that his music is the most noble ever written,**
25 **showing a true understanding of the human voice. Such**
26 **beautiful melodies!**

27 **He had told me that he wanted to die on Good Friday,**
28 **in the hope of rejoining the good God, his sweet Lord**
29 **and Savior, on the day of his resurrection.**

30 **And now that day is here. His last words to me were,**
31 **"I have now *done* with the world."**

32 **But, oh, my gallant Handel, my dear old friend, the**
33 **world is not yet *done* with you. God will continue to use**
34 **you down through the ages to spread his message that**
35 **our Redeemer does still live and will stand upon the earth**

1 and that Messiah alone is worthy to receive power, and
2 riches, and wisdom and strength, honor, and glory and
3 blessing. *(She bows her head as a choir sings or recording is*
4 *played of the ending of either the "Hallelujah Chorus" or "Worthy*
5 *Is the Lamb That Was Slain" from The Messiah.)*

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**My Cousin, Sebastian
(Johann Sebastian Bach)**

1
2
3
4 **BARBARA CATHARINA BACH:** Well, young man, were you
5 waiting to talk to me? Speak up! You've lately come from
6 London, I hear. From Oxford University? I understand
7 that you're doing scholarly research of some kind.

8 You are looking for a member of the Bach family?
9 Yes, I am sure there are hundreds of Bachs still to be
10 found around Arnstadt. You are talking to one now.

11 Yes, I'm a Bach twice over; a Bach by birth and
12 married to a Bach. I am Barbara Catharina Bach.

13 Is there a particular Bach you are looking for?

14 One from Eisenach? Yes, I'm from Eisenach. Most
15 of the Bachs in Arnstadt have roots in Eisenach.

16 You are looking for the *Lutheran* Bachs?

17 Don't tell me that you expected to find Bachs of any
18 other faith! A Calvinist Bach? A Reformed? Never! A
19 pietist or Moravian or Anabaptist Bach? You will never
20 find such in the Bach family! Of the true orthodox Lutheran
21 church we all are! Martin Luther himself preached in
22 our St. George's church in Eisenach after his trial when
23 returning from the Diet of Worms in 1521.

24 Now, which *Lutheran* Bach born in Eisenach are
25 you seeking? Oh, the *musical* one? (*She laughs.*)

26 But my son, *all* of the Bachs are musical! For genera-
27 tions the Bachs have produced the finest of the cantors,
28 organists, fiddlers, pipers, orchestra players of all
29 instruments, singers and choir masters.

30 And composers? Of course, composers! When I was a
31 girl, all the music my family sang and played was written
32 by our own relatives.

33 If you like music, you should have come to a Bach
34 family reunion. The reunions started about the time I
35 was born at the end of the Thirty Year War. They met first

1 to give thanks for the coming of peace. At that time, the
 2 family had spread out and were no longer living in one
 3 place. The older people resolved to keep the family close
 4 by meeting once each year.

5 The entire amusement for the family at these
 6 gatherings was musical. It was the custom to begin with
 7 religious music, as most were connected with church
 8 music in some way, but before the day was over, many
 9 comical and popular tunes were heard. Many of the
 10 townspeople would come by to listen, for they knew much
 11 entertainment could be found by listening to the extem-
 12 poraneous, hilarious comic words and harmonies made
 13 up by the Bach family.

14 So now, which *Lutheran musical* Bach born in
 15 Eisenach? *The organist!* Well, there was an organist
 16 named Bach at St. George's, and at Ohrdruf, at St.
 17 Michael's, St. John's and St. Matthew's. Why, there must
 18 be a dozen organists named Bach in this district alone!

19 Oh, you mean the *Lutheran organist* Bach with the
 20 Christian name, Johann. But, young man, almost *every*
 21 male child in our family was given the first name of
 22 Johann. There is Johann Christoph, Johann George,
 23 Johann Jakob, Johann Friedrich to name a few. So, you'll
 24 have to tell me more than just the name Johann Bach
 25 who was a Lutheran organist from Eisenach!

26 Now you tell me! He was cantor of St. Thomas, the
 27 famous Capellmeister of Leipzig. Well, why didn't you say
 28 so from the beginning? That was the son of my Uncle
 29 Johann Ambrosius, Johann *Sebastian* Bach. My cousin,
 30 Sebastian. I knew him well.

31 Sebastian was the seventh and last child of my Uncle
 32 Ambrosius. Uncle Ambrosius was the town piper of
 33 Eisenach and what a musician! He could perform and
 34 instruct in organ, violin, trumpet and military drums.
 35 His reputation was as the finest of the Eisenach town

1 musicians, the most honorable of Christian gentlemen.
2 He taught young Sebastian the violin.

3 Sebastian and I were about the same age and enjoyed
4 playing together at the family reunions and also performing
5 and singing together.

6 But, my poor cousin was left an orphan before his
7 tenth birthday. His eldest brother, Johann Christoph
8 took him and another brother, Johann Jakob, to live in
9 Ohrdruf, and so I lost contact with that family for some
10 years.

11 His brother continued Sebastian's musical education.
12 Young Sebastian was such a gifted singer that he contributed
13 to the family's support as a paid performer. Christoph,
14 however, had such a large family that he was forced to
15 put the two brothers out on their own at a young age.

16 Sebastian received a scholarship for vocally talented
17 youths to St. Michael's in Luneburg. At St. Michael's he
18 developed and perfected his great musical talent, partic-
19 ularly being influenced by the greatest French music.
20 Upon his graduation, he investigated three open organ
21 positions, but accepted the Boniface church in Arnstadt
22 where I was living.

23 I was told that his audition was so brilliant that they
24 heard no more candidates, although Sebastian was only
25 eighteen years old at the time. Also the town consistory
26 had to agree to pay him a higher wage to start than the
27 former organist had made in a lifetime.

28 Several of us Bach relatives were living at that time
29 at the Golden Crown and arranged for Sebastian to find
30 lodging there as well. We were so happy to renew our
31 friendship.

32 I introduced him to another distant cousin, Maria
33 Barbara Bach, who was living at the Golden Crown. She
34 was about our age. I proved a successful "Matchmaker"
35 that time, as he married her in 1707.

1 **Sebastian did have his troubles, though, in Arnstadt.**
2 **There was no cantor to be responsible to, but there was**
3 **continous trouble between him and his employers, the**
4 **town elders.**

5 **Since the Boniface church had no choir, Sebastian**
6 **was expected to assemble one from the town's Latin**
7 **school. These unruly boys were completely undisciplined**
8 **and not the least inclined toward music. One student was**
9 **almost as old as Sebastian. This young man was continually**
10 **causing disruptions. Sebastian nicknamed him "Nanny-**
11 **goat bassoonist." During a rehearsal one day, matters**
12 **came to blows when the boy attacked his choirmaster,**
13 **striking Sebastian with a club, causing Sebastian to**
14 **promptly draw his sword.**

15 **Fortunately, I had gone to help my cousin with the**
16 **rehearsal that day and had to vigorously intervene in**
17 **the fight myself to break it up! Later, I was called before**
18 **the town council to testify as a witness, helping to clear**
19 **my cousin of charges.**

20 **Another rebuke Sebastian received from the council**
21 **was that he had allowed a "strange maiden" to perform**
22 **music in the church.**

23 **At that time women were not allowed to sing in**
24 **church, not even as members of the choir. Sebastian**
25 **never broke this rule; he perfectly understood this**
26 **prohibition.**

27 **But one day he had asked me to come into the church**
28 **as he practiced to try out a new cantata aria. We certainly**
29 **saw no harm in my just helping with a rehearsal!**

30 **In the fall of 1705, Sebastian was excited with the**
31 **opportunity to visit the great organist and composer,**
32 **Buxtehude. He asked for four weeks leave for this trip,**
33 **but he stayed for four months, which of course greatly**
34 **incensed the council.**

35 **I think Sebastian really wanted to be Buxtehude's**

1 successor, but he quickly lost interest when he found
2 that there was a law requiring that the cantor marry his
3 predecessor's daughter. Another musician named George
4 Frederick Handel turned down the same position for the
5 same reason.

6 His lessons with Buxtehude improved his organ
7 artistry quite a bit, I thought, but upon Sebastian's return,
8 the council admonished him again. Besides being away
9 without leave for so long, his style of accompanying the
10 congregational singing had changed. The people were
11 shocked by the free style of chorale fantasy he used,
12 saying that he made many *curious* variations and mingled
13 many strange tones in it, so much so that the congregation
14 was confused by it!

15 I don't care what the others said, I thought his playing
16 was marvelously beautiful!

17 I wasn't the least surprised when Sebastian left
18 Arnstadt shortly after marrying Maria Barbara to accept
19 the organist post at Muhlhausen. There was a marked
20 salary increase. Sebastian always made sure of that. It
21 was some of our relatives who helped him secure the
22 position there. Family must stick together!

23 I heard it said of my cousin while he was at Muhlhausen
24 that no one has ever tried out organs as severely and yet
25 at the same time as honestly as Bach. He understood the
26 art of organ building to the highest degree.

27 I think my cousin was the happiest during the years
28 when he was primarily a secular musician at the court
29 of Duke Wilhelm. His salary tripled under the Duke. It
30 was liberating to be answerable to only one man instead
31 of a council. Duke Wilhelm was musically talented and
32 allowed Sebastian a great deal of freedom to develop his
33 art.

34 He advanced even further as Capellmeister and
35 director of chamber music for Prince Leopold.

1 **At first his old Duke resented Bach's change of**
2 **position and had him arrested.**

3 **Sebastian intended to remain under Prince Leopold**
4 **for the rest of his life, but the atmosphere at court changed**
5 **when the young prince married a woman who was**
6 **decidedly "un-musical"!**

7 **My cousin could never get away from the call of the**
8 **church. He had continued to do some of his finest writing**
9 **for the church while serving the royal courts.**

10 **He auditioned for St. Catherine Church in Hamburg**
11 **before the old organ master Reinken who remarked upon**
12 **hearing Bach, "I thought this art of organ playing had**
13 **perished, but I see that *in you* it still lives!"**

14 **Sebastian declined this position because he found**
15 **out the post of organist could be bought with a bribe.**

16 **I believe that Sebastian was drawn more to the**
17 **music of the church after the sudden death of his wife.**
18 **He had left her quite healthy when he went on a trip**
19 **with Prince Leopold, but he returned a few weeks later**
20 **to find her already dead and buried. All of our family**
21 **grieved for our sweet cousin, and our hearts went out to**
22 **Sebastian, being left with all those little children, the**
23 **oldest just ten.**

24 **We were all thankful when he found such a fine wife**
25 **in young Anna Magdalena Wilchken. She was a trained**
26 **soprano and employed herself by Prince Leopold as a**
27 **"Royal Singer." Anna learned to copy Bach's music**
28 **manuscripts so well that you could not tell her hand-**
29 **writing from his.**

30 **When Sebastian auditioned for St. Thomas Church**
31 **in Leipzig, I heard that he was third choice. The Leipzig**
32 **council stated that "as the *best* could not be obtained, we**
33 **must take the *middling*."**

34 **Before he received this post, Sebastian had to prove**
35 **that he was indeed a composer of sacred music, so between**

1 **January and March of 1723 he composed the *St. John***
2 ***Passion*. Maybe in future years, it will be proven what**
3 **truly great music this *St. John* is. I do not believe that the**
4 **congregation comprehended or appreciated it at that time.**

5 The city of Leipzig had an appeal to Sebastian
6 because of the university where his sons could study and
7 where he could find talented pupils, for he was an inspired
8 and inspiring teacher.

9 Sebastian was pleased and proud of the musical
10 talent of his own sons and daughters. He told me that they
11 were all born musicians and made it possible for him to
12 arrange both vocal and instrumental ensembles within
13 his own household. Sebastian was the father of twenty-
14 one children, so there were always many little mouths
15 to feed!

16 I cannot believe the schedule that Sebastian followed
17 during his years at St. Thomas. As cantor-organist he
18 also was responsible for the St. Thomas school, not just
19 the music teaching at the school, but *all* of the school.

20 He was in charge of all the musical activities of the
21 city as well.

22 Also the cantor was responsible for the musical
23 arrangements in all *five* churches in Leipzig. In the two
24 main churches a four hour worship service was held each
25 Sunday with both a motet and cantata being required
26 each week.

27 There were constant problems and hassles with the
28 city council again. The council continued to see Johann
29 Sebastian Bach as the incorrigible school cantor, never
30 as the superlative genius that he was.

31 Lack of funds was a constant worry.

32 There were no prominent professional musicians
33 available to him. His choirs and orchestras were largely
34 made up of students and townspeople who were depressingly
35 mediocre. He said, "Discretion forbids me from speaking

1 truth about their qualities and musical knowledge.”

2 When his situation became unbearable, he tried once
3 again to find a change of location. He found the city a
4 very expensive place to live and he never obtained many
5 of the fees which had been promised to him. He told me
6 that the authorities were odd and little interested in
7 music and that he lived amid continual vexation, envy
8 and persecution.

9 But despite the grueling demands in Leipzig, Sebastian
10 did not retreat, but remained faithful, serving there for
11 twenty-seven years until his death.

12 The title of his final composition was prophetic, an
13 organ chorale, “Before Thy Throne Herewith I Stand.”

14 In my cousin’s thinking, God stood at the center of
15 things. All things were accomplished by God and in God
16 all was secure. To him, the purpose of music was always
17 for the praising of God and the proclaiming of Christ
18 Jesus as Savior. He insisted that the aim and final reason
19 for all music should be nothing else but the glory of God
20 and the refreshment of the spirit.

21 That is why at the beginning of each of his compositions
22 he wrote: “in nomine Jesu” (Jesus, help me) and at the
23 close: “Soli Deo Gloria” (To God alone be the praise).

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1 Lady Huntingdon Salutes Charles Wesley

2

3 **ATRISE:** LADY HUNTINGDON enters during the congregational
4 singing of the hymn, "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing." She
5 is dressed in rather an elaborate costume of the eighteenth
6 century befitting the station of a Countess. She looks around
7 in wonder, amazement and amusement at the twentieth-century
8 environment in which she finds herself.

9

10 **LADY HUNTINGDON:** *(She speaks directly to the audience.)* That
11 is beautiful singing which glorifies our Lord Jesus Christ
12 and proclaims his gospel in a powerful way. I recognize
13 that the words are by my good friend, Charles Wesley,
14 but the tune is strange to me.

15 I gather from the enthusiastic hymn singing that
16 you must be Wesleyans or, as I believe they are called
17 today, Methodists.

18 *(If the group is Methodist, proceed with the line: "I was very near
19 you in doctrine myself. . . ." If the group is not Methodist, add:*

20 "No? [Name their denomination]? You say that you are
21 [name their denomination]?"

22 "Yes, I do recall a small group from my time in England
23 who were known as [name their denomination]. They were that
24 strict Calvinist group who taught that only the elect could be
25 saved. I remember how they would come to the Wesley meetings
26 to ridicule. They led picket lines around the fringes of the crowd
27 to disrupt the meetings!

28 "Now, don't get your dander up; I did not come to criticize
29 [name their denomination]." Then continue with:)

30 I was very near you in doctrine myself. My group was
31 known as the Calvinistic Methodists. We were led by my
32 own chaplain, George Whitefield, who preached many
33 times here in the colonies and helped to begin that revival
34 known as the "Great Awakening" which greatly influenced
35 your American forefathers.

1 **What? You do not recognize me? Have the evangelical**
2 **churches forgotten the Countess of Huntingdon? I am**
3 **Selina Hastings Huntingdon. Married in 1728 to the Earl**
4 **of Huntingdon. When he died in 1746, I found my solace in**
5 **leading a devout Christian life and dedicating my fortune**
6 **to build chapels and found colleges for the education of**
7 **ministers. I was able to use political influence to intervene**
8 **when the evangelicals were persecuted. But the endeavor**
9 **which I *most* enjoyed was the publication of about one**
10 **dozen hymn collections.**

11 **I was strongly influenced by both John and Charles**
12 **Wesley in realizing the importance of the new hymnals**
13 **for the church.**

14 **The real downfall of the other denominations of**
15 **Wesley's day was that they did not recognize hymn singing**
16 **as an innovative way to teach doctrine. But this attitude**
17 **really worked out for their good. Other groups may have**
18 **gone to hear the Wesleys to scoff, but they stayed to sing.**
19 **They began to enjoy the hymn singing. They began to go**
20 **early and stay late to join in, learning the new hymns**
21 **and tunes and even took the Wesley hymns back to their**
22 **own churches. All denominations learned from these**
23 **hymns a new system of theology which emphasized a**
24 **missionary spirit.**

25 **Charles and John probably received their love of**
26 **music from their mother, Susanna Wesley, for she always**
27 **began her teaching of them at home with singing of the**
28 **psalms. Later John criticized the psalmody of the old**
29 **version and felt a continuing need for reform in congregational**
30 **singing which was begun by Isaac Watts, another**
31 **of my good friends.**

32 **On their trip to Georgia in 1735, the Wesleys met**
33 **some Moravians and were attracted by their enthusiastic**
34 **singing. John began to study German so that he could**
35 **translate their hymns into English.**

1 **Back in England, later when crowds of people were**
2 **flocking to their meetings, hymn singing became their**
3 **trademark. John was the mighty preacher and adminis-**
4 **trator, but Charles was the poet.**

5 **He wrote poems on horseback, walking, at home, in**
6 **the pulpit — everywhere. He even thought in verse. He**
7 **wrote around 6,500 hymns experimenting with thirty**
8 **different meters. Both of the Wesleys knew the teaching**
9 **power of the hymns which could sum up the sermon's**
10 **thought and send it distinctly into the minds and hearts**
11 **of the hearers.**

12 **The unlimited atonement which they preached was**
13 **sung in their hymns. *All* mankind must give an account**
14 **to God: Christ died for *all* mankind. “All” was a favorite**
15 **word of Charles. There was hope for *all* people. They**
16 **were elected if they would only believe! Salvation was**
17 **not just for the few: it was for *all* who would accept.**

18 **“Love” was also a dominant theme of the Wesley**
19 **hymns. Almost every hymn mentions love.**

20 **Charles was called by some the “Master of the biblical**
21 **mosaic” because he used hundreds of Scriptures as the**
22 **basis of his hymns. It has been said that if our New**
23 **Testament was to be lost, there is enough gospel contained**
24 **in the hymns of Charles Wesley to put it back together**
25 **again.**

26 **Remember that Charles' purpose was not to write**
27 **great literary poetry, but to put the gospel on the lips**
28 **and into the hearts of all sorts of people.**

29 **Another concern was for the hymn tunes. Most of**
30 **these people could not read so they had to be taught the**
31 **hymn by rote. If they were to sing at all, they had to sing**
32 **music they already knew from everyday life. The Wesleys**
33 **had the good musical sense to know that new tunes and all**
34 **kinds of music must be found to meet this challenge of**
35 **carrying the Christian gospel by song. It was Martin Luther**



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