TRANSLATING "TRANSITION": A CASE STUDY IN INTERPRETING SEVENTEENTH CENTURY GERMAN CHURCH MUSIC THROUGH A SURVEY OF THREE SETTINGS OF *CHRIST LAG IN TODESBANDEN*

Ryan Michael Mullaney

A dissertation

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Musical Arts

University of Washington

2018

Reading Committee:

Geoffrey Boers, Chair

Stephen Rumph

Stephen Stubbs

Program authorized to offer degree:

Music

University of Washington

Abstract

Translating "Transition": A Case Study in Interpreting Seventeenth Century German Church Music through a Survey of Three Settings of *Christ lag in Todesbanden*

Ryan Michael Mullaney

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:
Associate Professor Geoffrey Boers
School of Music

The sacred music of central Germany in the eighteenth century, particularly that of Johann Sebastian Bach, has been studied extensively. This scholarship extends well beyond the typical scope of inquiry, and (perhaps rightfully) seems to magnify the minutest details in its quest for authenticity and perfection. While the style that came to be synonymous with composers of the Baroque era has been expounded upon, the evolution of conventions that led to its refinement provide a further layer of intrigue. Seventeenth-century music was not a transition, but a fluent continuation, and even more so, a refinement of thought in its own right. This fluency can be seen through music of Sebastian Knüpfer (1633-1676) and Johann Kuhnau, who represent similar shifts into the height of music making in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Presented as a conductor's compendium, this paper presents a case study into research of historical performance practices of seventeenth-century protestant Germany, and samples a wide but focused range of sources in order to reach its conclusions. The three works being compared are based on the same text and represent different developmental periods beginning with the most well-known and working backward, creating a conduit through which to present these conventions in context. The ideals of dramatic intent and textual clarity (with particular importance on rhetoric) highlight specific areas of emphasis for the performer including form, function, and instrumentation. Still, it is not enough to simply consider these works as a part of some overarching lineage. An approach more reflective of current scholarship would be for performer and scholar alike to consider each composer or work individually, while simultaneously placing them in the proper historical context.

A survey of manuscripts (which to this point are unpublished as performing editions) between Knüpfer and Kuhnau reveal a wealth of music written in a style that elucidates the foundations of the now famed eighteenth-century protestant church cantatas. An analysis of a new performing edition of Knüpfer's *Christ lag in Todesbanden* prepared as part of this study and compared with existing editions by Bach and Kuhnau, will help to survey the performing conventions and style during this period, ultimately making it more accessible to a modern audience. This further emphasizes that the fluency of seventeenth-century music, partially codified through Kuhnau, Knüpfer, and Bach, was both the summation of an idea, and the flowering of an ideal.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Topic Overview

Historically informed performance in early music (referring at least colloquially to that which was written before the likes of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart) was, even in the latter part of twentieth century, something that seemed unthinkable to most modern conductors and ensembles.[1] The latter half of the century benefited from evolving research, aided by the likes of many pioneers in the field. This led to both the birth of this H.I.P. movement as well as countless very public feuds amongst performers and scholars alike. One need only recall the famed Rifkin-Koopman debate that graced the pages of *Early Music* for several years in the late nineteen-nineties for one such example. While even this remains a polarizing subject to date,[2] the waves of interest and scholarship surrounding historically informed performance have laid the groundwork for a more discerning, if not accurate approach to the performance of early music. This provides musicians the benefit of detailed guidance, for example, regarding what cadences should be foreshortened or whether an *acciaccatura* was an

---

[1]Nicholas Temperley, "The Movement puts a Stronger Premium on Novelty than on

[2] For the initial response by Ton Koopman to the writings of Rifkin and Andrew Parrott see "Bach's Choir: an ongoing story," *Early Music* Vol. 26, No. 1 (Feb., 1998), pp. 109-121. This is the continuation of an argument that arose following a 1981 presentation by Rifkin to the American Musicological Society, and followed up with an article "Bach's Chorus: A Preliminary Report" in *The Musical Times*, Vol. 123, No. 1677 (Nov. 1982). Rifkin's assertions were subsequently rebutted by Robert Marshall in "Bach's Chorus: A Preliminary Reply to Joshua Rifkin," Vol. 124, No. 1679 (Jan. 1983).

appropriate addition to the realization of the continuo player's figures. While the previous example detailing the size of Bach's choir is well reasoned on both sides, and strives for authenticity, are we able to discern what is truly authentic in every case? Perhaps more importantly, does this scholarship imply the same set of standards for music that preceded the likes of Bach?

The preponderance of recent scholarship specifically into eighteenth century music has empowered a new generation of performances by modern orchestras, often with a knowledgeable "specialist" leading the ensemble. The renewed interest in this repertory is in large part to the devotion of those scholars who have scoured through various primary sources in order to better interpret the unwritten musical conventions of an era. As such, mainstream ensembles feel empowered to re-establish these works as a part of their own repertory introducing a new generation of listeners to a style that is arguably steeped in expressive freedom and unpredictable excitement. This is not to say that every modern conductor has a copy of *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen*[3] on their shelf, but they (at very least) recognize and often implement much of this type of valuable scholarship into their performances. There are unmistakable benefits to a newly developed accessibility to this music, but the adage that a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing should give us pause.

In a similar guise, historically informed performances of eighteenth century masterworks are hardly *avant-garde* in the present generation; still, there is a pioneering group of musicians who continue to delve into new and unexplored repertory and its requisite historical performance standards. This

[3] A treatise by Quantz entitled "On Playing the Flute."

trend now extends further into the canon of later eighteenth and nineteenth century works with ensembles such as Gardiner's *Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique* leading the way. While there is a concurrent movement into the further study of performance practice of seventeenth century works, it does not extend far beyond the historically informed movement. This is perhaps in small part because of its fluent nature, with more variables that, the least of which, include instruments for which no modern equivalent exist.[4] Given that this newly substantiated understanding of eighteenth century music was vital to the incursion of historically informed performances reaching into nineteenth century music, could it not be a similarly essential gateway to analyzing music of the previous century as well?

As a result of these complexities, many have disregarded or incorrectly labeled the seventeenth century as transitional, having been dotted with certain gifted composers including the likes of Monteverdi, Schütz, and Buxtehude. While historians are correct to draw attention to these individuals, it is misguided to maintain them as the only bright spots of what was at worst, a period of great invention. In fact, there is much information to be gleaned from the precursors to the Protestant chorale cantata, especially as regards German musical accomplishments on the whole, as much of this music is worthy of performance in its own right. More often than not, scholars focus on tying the influence of one composer to the next, and in so doing create an indelible link to a more eminent style or trend. Yet the fluidity of seventeenth century, in all of its development,

[4] Jeffrey Kite-Powell and Stuart Carter, *A Performers Guide to Seventeenth Century Music,* 2nd edition (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012): xv.

takes this task from the traditional realm of musicology, to the practical application of performance, a discipline far more freeing than exacting. This assessment will inevitably draw links to the well-known church music hub of Leipzig, which presents familiar territory and those necessary compositional links that are undoubtedly important in the study of historical musicology. Yet as a performer compendium, this does little to inform actual music making.

Instead, we must remove the music from previously understood categories, and evaluate each individual work based on its musical and rhetorical characteristics. This methodology will, in turn, leave preconceived notions of style behind, and allow for fresh approach to music making that strives for both an egoless interpretation of the composer's intentions and a practical application of period performing conventions. It is true that designated "conductors" of the period share little resemblance with those of present day symphony orchestras. Within these modern circles, following generalized hard-and-fast rules arbitrarily extracted from informed performance practice, can lead to lackluster and unimaginative performances. As such, it is clear that a case-study for those outside the historically informed performance movement is needed to show that development from the seventeenth into the eighteenth century is fluid, organically changing in style and practice based on unique circumstances in each country and region. This dissertation, by way of studying three settings by composers who each held the same position, will demonstrate this variability, the need for a flexible approach by the conductor, and draw a connection from Renaissance to the Baroque while simultaneously demonstrating the details that make them distinct from each other.