out that the only extant manuscript of Renart’s *Rose* is from the late thirteenth century and that it includes no music, she opines that “when we ... recognise the patchy nature of music copying it is impossible to rely on its absence here as evidence that music was not transmitted in writing in an earlier version” (p. 20). This reasoning ex silentio actually contributes less to her larger argument about the presence of lyric in the context of the narrative than would a more direct confrontation of the issue of transmission.

One area in which Butterfield’s book should inspire further study is the role that music plays in delineating genre. She offers fresh ideas, although her musical analyses are more abstract than concrete, evoking the music as a performative indicator but not fully accounting for its style or exploring how it interacts with the words. The melody of two verses from a song by Richard de Fournival, for example, is “a haunting, controlled phrase from an elevated musical register” that contrasts sharply with “other refrain melodies, which often have a more abrupt, light and dance-like character” (p. 251). Such evocative language begs for proof. (All examples in the book are reprinted from earlier editions, including, as in this case, those by Gennrich, resulting in an unevenness in quality and inconsistency in editorial method.)

While these are not minor issues, perhaps it is too much to expect that a book of such scope and substance should cover every aspect of the issues it addresses with equal depth. As it is, like a medieval narrative the book repays more than one reading; its multitude of strands weaves a tapestry whose aspect changes from one viewing to the next. Butterfield’s research has opened new doors of inquiry that are sure to reinvigorate our study of medieval French song.

ELIZABETH AUBREY


It is ironic that of the many books written about the life and music of Johann Sebastian Bach in the two centuries that have passed since the appearance of Forkel’s ground-breaking *Ueber Johann Sebastian Bachs Leben, Kunst und Kunstwerke* (Leipzig: Hoffmeister und Kühnel, 1802), not one has focused exclusively on the very quality that makes the composer’s style unique: counterpoint. Bach’s obsession with contrapuntal writing and his remarkable skill at handling it was readily recognized during his lifetime, when it was the object of both great praise (mainly from his students and a small band of connoisseurs) and sharp reproach (chiefly from forward-looking figures like Johann Mattheson and Johann Adolph Scheibe). Now, at last, David Yearsley
of Cornell University has put together a full-length study of Bach’s contrapuntal art, one that focuses not only on the technical aspects of the venerable Thomaskantor’s counterpoint, as exemplified especially in his late canons and keyboard works, but also on the musical, theological, social, and political contexts in which the counterpoint was conceived.

The titles of the six chapters give a good sense of Yearsley’s broad, “harmony and hermeneutics” approach: “Vor deinen Thron tret ich and the Art of Dying,” “The Alchemy of Bach’s Canons,” “Bach’s Taste for Pork or Canary” (on the Duetto in F Major from Clavierübung III and the Canonic Variations on “Vom Himmel hoch”), “The Autocratic Regimes of A Musical Offering,” “Bach the Machine” (on the canons from the Art of Fugue), and “Physiognomies of Bach’s Counterpoint” (on the Musical Offering, once again). As the titles imply, this is a wide-ranging examination of Bach’s counterpoint. Yearsley begins each chapter by discussing a seemingly unrelated, non-musical (or only partially musical) topic before working his way to specific examples of Bach’s contrapuntal craft. Sometimes this works, and sometimes it does not.

In the first chapter, on Bach’s Sterbechoral, for instance, Yearsley succeeds brilliantly. He opens with a detailed description of Bach on his deathbed and the elaborate Lutheran rites that would have accompanied the composer’s final days. Yearsley emphasizes that the preparations for death were unusually critical in cases of long, drawn-out illnesses (Bach was bedridden almost four months, from his first eye operation on 28 March or so until his death on 28 July 1750). Theological volumes in Bach’s library such as August Pfeiffer’s Anti-melancholicus, oder Melancholey-Vertreiber (Leipzig: Gleditsch, 1691) offered copious advice on facing the final struggle, which for devout Lutherans was the culmination of a lifetime of preparation. Biblical passages were read and chorales were sung at the bedside, as a means of fortifying faith, and those present looked for specific signs of piety and steadfastness. It was believed that the last words and actions of the dying one offered a glimpse at transcendence. The Todes-Stunde, mentioned so often in Bach’s sacred cantatas, was duly noted and recorded, as the culminating event in the death battle. For Bach, it was “a little after a quarter past eight in the evening.”

Yearsley then demonstrates how counterpoint was linked with the idea of transcendence. Werckmeister, a theorist whom Bach read, admired, and paraphrased, tied double counterpoint and canon with the orderly movement of the planets (p. 20). Moreover, he specifically connected invertible counterpoint with cosmological order. In Strungk’s Ricercar sopra la morte della mia carissima Madre Catharina Maria Stubenrauen, Buxtehude’s Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin (BuxWV 76), Christian Flor’s Todes-Gedanken in dem
Liede “Auf meinen lieben Gott,” and other German works, contrapuntal artifice was used to celebrate the orderly transition from death to heavenly existence. God stood as the “taskmaster of order, the guiding principle of everything,” according to Athanasius Kircher in *Musurgia universalis* (Rome, 1650). Strict counterpoint reflected that order.

Viewed in this light, Bach’s so-called *Sterbechoral, Vor deinen Thron tret ich hiermit*, BWV 668, fits into the tradition of contrapuntal funereal works and becomes Bach’s last, humble, earthly offering—his musical fare for the journey to a new state. Yearsley sees *Vor deinen Thron* as “a prelude not to congregational singing, but to eternal life” (p. 39), and suggests that the piece, with its “ich” narrator (rather than the “wir” of its earlier version, *Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein*, BWV 668a), is analogous to the prospopoeia of a funeral oration, in which the departed one speaks directly to the mourners, consoling them from God’s safe haven. *Vor deinem Thron* suggested that Bach was to be happily seated once again at his favorite instrument, the pipe organ, in the life beyond. Seen within the context of the *Ars moriendi*, the modest, 45-measure-long chorale prelude becomes the most important work of Bach’s life, and its inclusion in the *Art of Fugue* by Bach’s heirs becomes more understandable. Moreover, the final revisions that distinguish *Vor deinen Thron* from *Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein*, BWV 668a, already noted by Hans Klotz and Christoph Wolff,2 “were thus a last devout utterance in the lofty musical discourse that would be worthy of a saved man” (p. 12).

Yearsley’s detailed analysis of the counterpoint in *Vor deinem Thron* is first-rate. He highlights the highly refined use of contrary motion, inversion, stretto, and diminution, and makes the case for ranking *Vor deinen Thron* as a special, late manifestation of Bachian counterpoint, a piece closer in spirit to the Canonic Variations on “Vom Himmel hoch,” which directly precede it in the famous late organ workbook *P 271* (in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz), than to the other choral preludes in the “Great Eighteen Collection,” also found in the manuscript.3 Yearsley’s overview and analysis add a new dimension to our understanding of Bach’s last musical utterance.


3. In light of the fact that Yearsley links the counterpoint of *Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein*, BWV 668a, with the final months of Bach’s life, it seems ironic that he then follows the lead of Wolff (“Bach’s Deathbed Chorale,” 288–89), Peter Williams (*The Organ Music of J. S. Bach*, 2nd ed. [Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003], 382–85), and Russell Stinson (*J. S. Bach’s Great Eighteen Organ Chorales* [Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001], 33–35 and 104–5) in assigning the work to a significantly earlier time, either to Bach’s Weimar tenure (1708–17) or to the period 1739–47, when Bach was assembling the “Great Eighteen Collection” in *P 271*. BWV 668a represents a revision of the *Orgelbüchlein*.
Equally strong is Yearsley’s discussion of the *galant* nature of Bach’s late counterpoint. He points out that the Canon Variations on “Vom Himmel hoch” of 1747 serve as a showcase for Bach’s contrapuntal skills (the canons are left unresolved in the printed edition, thus underscoring their contrapuntal strictness), as one would expect of a work that was used for admission into Mizler’s Society of Learned Musicians. But he also recognizes that they also display many features that point to practical performance. Marked “à 2 Clav. et Pedal” in the printed edition, the Variations clearly were earmarked for playing, not abstract contemplation. The extensive trills and detailed slurs suggest a finely nuanced performance, as does the “Cantabile” marking for Variation 3. Yearsley emphasizes the consonant naturalness of Variation 1, which in fact is a gentle pastorale in 12/8 meter. In the “Goldberg” Variations, the final Quodlibet Variation similarly shows Bach’s willingness to bring counterpoint into the realm of popular style, even after a series of increasingly intricate canons.

Yearsley sees the *Musical Offering*, too, not as a curiosity, a record of a historical visit in which Bach demonstrated an antiquated manner of playing, but rather as a piece that very much caught the progressive spirit of Frederick the Great’s Berlin court. Yearsley points to the contrapuntal nature of contemporary chamber works by Telemann, Pepusch, Graupner, J. F. Fasch, and others (here one can add the extraordinary contrapuntal trio sonatas and quartet of chorale *Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein*, BWV 641, through the stripping away of the coloratura diminutions in the hymn tune and the insertion of contrapuntal interludes before and between the phrases of the melody.

To be sure, the process of expanding an *Orgelbüchlein* chorale into a “Great Eighteen Chorale” can be seen in *Komm, Gott Schöpfer, heiliger Geist*, BWV 667, a piece fashioned as early as Bach’s Weimar years from the shorter *Orgelbüchlein* setting, BWV 631. But the paring away of notes in BWV 641 to produce the simpler cantus firmus of BWV 668a, a gesture Yearsley aptly terms “an act of purification,” is extremely rare in Bach, who when revising pieces normally worked in the direction of expansion and embellishment. The reductionist approach has its closest parallel in the refinements that take place in the final portions of the B-Minor Mass, in the “Benedictus” and “Agnus Dei” movements of the Sanctus and Agnus Dei portions, in particular, which date from the last two years of Bach’s life. (On the unique nature of the revisions of the “Agnus Dei,” for example, see Christoph Wolff, “The Agnus Dei of the B-Minor Mass: Parody and New Composition Reconciled,” in his *Bach: Essays on His Life and Music*, 332–39.)

I believe that BWV 668a may have been produced at the same period as the final portions of the B-Minor Mass—i.e., 1748–49—or perhaps in 1750, through Bach’s bedside dictation to his son-in-law Johann Friedrich Altnickol, as claimed by Forkel, or even by Bach himself during the short period ten days before his death, when he could “suddenly see quite well again” (to quote the Obituary of 1754). There is no extant manuscript pointing to an earlier period: the sole early source of BWV 668a is the *Art of Fugue* print. Yearsley’s analysis supports the idea of a late dating for BWV 668a—that is, for the conversion of the *Orgelbüchlein* chorale *Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein*, BWV 641, into *Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein*, BWV 668a, which Bach then refined further to produce *Vor deinen Thron trete ich*, BWV 668. This would suggest that *Vor deinen Thron* represents a complete, death-bed rethinking of the *Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein* setting rather than just a last-minute editorial touch-up.
Johann Gottlieb Goldberg) and claims that Bach’s use of counterpoint in the Trio Sonata of the *Musical Offering* was not out of step with contemporary tastes. To underscore this point he cites passages from the canonic trios of Fasch and Graupner, in particular, and concludes that for many bourgeois dilettantes and learned professionals, “Counterpoint was less a harsh land of barbarians and recluses—or of pedants and bores, as Niedt put it—than an inviting shore” (p. 143). In the canons of the *Musical Offering*, especially the Canon perpetuus and the Canon à 2 “Quaerendo invenietis,” Yearsley spots *galant* features as well: Bach’s use of the expressive transverse flute and violin rather than the more neutral keyboard for realization, for instance, suggests that the canons were taken as light, conversational banter instead of ponderous pedantry. As banter, canons were appropriate for evening entertainment for Frederick the Great, Count von Keyserlingk (dedicat ee of the “Goldberg” Variations), and other nobles. The discussion here is rich with allusions to contemporary music and theory. Strangely missing, however, is any mention of Mary Oleskiewicz’s important recent work on Frederick’s flute sonatas, in which she further confirms that contrapuntal tastes were in favor at the Berlin court.4

Another significant contribution is Yearsley’s illumination of the methods used by Bach and his contemporaries to compose canons. Drawing chiefly from Marpurg’s *Abhandlung von der Fuge* (Berlin: Haude & Spener, 1754), Yearsley demonstrates how Bach wrote the crab canon in the *Musical Offering* and illustrates with a canon of his own on the Royal Theme. Rather than involving a profound mystery, as suggested some years ago by Douglas Hofstadter in *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), the composition of crab canons followed set rules, as Telemann demonstrated in his satirical canon *Die verkehrte Welt*. In Yearsley’s opinion, “Bach’s crab canon should be viewed not as a piece of dark esoterica, but as an invitation to recreation and amusement” (p. 155).

Less successful in Yearsley’s study are the sections in which metaphors are stretched. For instance, the concluding chapter opens with a lengthy discussion of Bach’s “bones,” based principally on Wilhelm His’s report of the excavations in the churchyard of the Johanniskirche in the fall of 1894. His, the Leipzig historian Gustav Wustmann, and the sculptor Karl Seffner (who later crafted the famous Bach bust and memorial statue from the skull) declared that the skeleton pulled from the earth on 22 October was Bach’s remains, with little concrete evidence to support the claim. While this story is not new, Yearsley tells it in an entertaining way and includes detailed vintage photos of the dissected skull and skeleton. But the transition from the exhumation and the reconstruction of Bach’s physiognomy to the linking of Bach’s counter-

point with the nationalistic aggressions of Frederick the Great and Hitler and the defeat of tonal harmony by the composers of the Second Viennese school is quite a stretch. It is as if Yearsley had a lot of off-the-beaten-track material on Bach’s bones and German politics and wanted to fit it into a discussion of counterpoint, no matter how dissonant the competing lines of thought might be. The indirect nature of the discussion reminds one more of Bach’s digressive, diffusive early pieces than his concise, focused late works.

This is both the great strength and weakness of this book. Yearsley’s range of references is impressive. He draws evidence from theologians, historians, philosophers, and theorists (including Mattheson, whose presence is greater than his music merits). Yet sometimes, in the heat of cooking up a tasty hermeneutic brew, he misses the musically obvious. In his analysis of the Duetto in F Major from *Clavierübung III*, for instance, he terms the subject of the B section “awkward” and “unnatural,” and its harmonies “bizarre,” without considering that the whole purpose of the collection was to push the envelope of Baroque harmonic vocabulary, via modality, enriched chords, and augmented melodic intervals. Where else could Bach go after the exhaustive traditional tonal vocabulary of his works up to 1735? Yearsley also makes much of the presence of invertible counterpoint in *galant* trios without mentioning Bach’s extraordinary use of it throughout the organ trio sonatas, whose “refreshing naturalness” was praised by C. P. E. Bach.

“I was obligated to be industrious; whoever is equally industrious will succeed equally well,” J. S. Bach is credited with saying. Precisely how industriously he worked at counterpoint, even late in life, is illuminated by three important discoveries since Yearsley completed his study.

The first is Christoph Wolff’s uncovering of a manuscript set of rules for voice-leading in five-part writing, appended to the German version of Fux’s counterpoint treatise *Gradus ad Parnassum* (Leipzig, 1742) by Bach’s student Johann Friedrich Agricola and later reproduced in print, in a slightly different form, in Kirnberger’s *Die Kunst des reinen Satzes* as “Regula Ioh. Seb. Bachii: In Compositione quinque partibus instructa non sunt duplicandae.” The short set of handwritten examples sets forth the intervals that may not be duplicated in five-part writing and the proper voice-leading for resolving each one. As Wolff points out, the “Regula” seem to suggest that Bach considered a compositional treatise such as Fux’s *Gradus* incomplete if it did not address contrapuntal considerations beyond four parts.

The second is Walter Werbeck’s discovery of a pair of autograph manuscripts, from the collection of Peters-Verlag, containing contrapuntal


The first manuscript, dating from after 1742, contains “Etzliche Reguln, wie und auf was Arth die Syncopationes in denen dreÿen Sorten derer gedupfelten Contrapuncten können gebraucht werden.” Bach’s guidelines are similar to the instructions—discussed by Yearsley (pp. 12–13, 45, 47, 78)—of Bernhard in *Tractatus compositionis augmentatus* (ca. 1657) and Walther in *Praecepta der musicalischen Composition* (1708) for writing invertible counterpoint at the octave, tenth, and twelfth. But Bach’s rules are more concise and adventurous. They show that in the teaching of counterpoint, Bach focused on specific, musically bold excerpts rather than dry inversion-interval tables and formulaic examples such as those found in Berardi’s *Documenti armonici* of 1687 (reproduced in Yearsley, p. 196). This supports Forkel’s comments on Bach’s teaching of composition:

> With all his strictness . . . he allowed his pupils, in other respects, great liberties. In the use of the intervals, in the turns of the melody and harmony, he let them dare whatever they would and could, only taking care to admit nothing which could be detrimental to the musical euphony. . . . Other teachers of composition before him, Berardi, Bononcini, and Fux, for instance, did not allow so many liberties. They were afraid that their pupils might thereby get entangled in dangers, but thus evidently prevented them from learning to overcome dangers. Bach’s mode of teaching is, therefore, undoubtedly better and leads the pupil further.

The second Peters autograph, dating from the period 1739 to 1742, contains seven pages of examples of double and triple counterpoint from Zarlino’s *Le istitutioni harmoniche* (1558), as transmitted to Germany via Sethus Calvisius’s *Melopioia sive Melodiae condendae ratio* (Erfurt; Baumann, 1592; reprinted Magdeburg: Francus, 1630). In Bach’s manuscript, the Calvisius text is considerably shortened, suggesting that Bach (or possibly the writer of an intermediary source) was more interested in musical examples than written explanations. Bach may have copied the examples in conjunction with writing the *Art of Fugue* and the “Goldberg” Variations. At the same time, they clearly reflect his late interest in the sixteenth-century *stile antico*, as represented by theorists as well as composers.

The third find is the most spectacular: a series of contrapuntal studies written jointly by Bach and his eldest son Wilhelm Friedemann, discovered by Peter Wollny in the Berlin Singakademie material that surfaced in Kiev in 1999. The studies appear at the end of a manuscript containing a set of instrumental trios by Friedemann from the period 1736 to 1738. They repren-
sent an informal musical conversation between father and son, as colleagues (Friedemann was 26 or so, and organist at the Sophienkirche in Dresden at the time), over issues of invertible counterpoint, canon, and fugue, possibly carried out during Sebastian’s visit to Dresden in December 1736 to accept the honorary title of Composer to the Court of Friedrich August II and play the new Silbermann organ in the recently completed Frauenkirche.

The dialogue begins with several two-part exercises by Friedemann in double counterpoint, using a single theme for examples at the octave and the tenth. Sebastian follows with an example at the twelfth, and then explores techniques used in canon and fugue writing—diminution, inversion, and stretto. This is followed by counterpoint in *stile antico*: Friedemann begins with a two-part example at the octave. Sebastian improves it, and then expands it to three parts by adding a voice in parallel thirds—the very technique described by Bernhard and Theile (in the *Musicales Kunstbuch*), as mentioned by Yearsley (p. 78). Examples by Sebastian in “Dorius,” Phrygius,” and “Lydius” point to the modal writing of *Clavierübung III*, which was completed in 1739 but surely started sooner. Finally, joint exercises by Friedemann and Sebastian explore issues of real and tonal answers in fugue writing. One example contains a chromatic theme in D minor that foreshadows a subject found in Contrapunctus V of the *Art of Fugue*, confirming once more Christoph Wolff’s view that the collection was well underway by 1740 at the latest.

In his stimulating book, Yearsley compellingly demonstrates the multifaceted importance of counterpoint in the musical culture of the German Baroque. The recent discoveries of Wolff, Werbeck, and Wollny underscore this view, and strongly hint that counterpoint was always on Bach’s mind. Indeed, it seems to have pervaded not only Bach’s life and music but the culture, politics, rites, and even after-dinner conversations of the time.

GEORGE B. STAUFFER


Most readers of Mark Everist’s new book will be surprised at the Théâtre de l’Odéon’s brief history as a lyric theater. Still operating today in the Latin Quarter, just steps away from the Jardin du Luxembourg and the Sorbonne, the Odéon has a history dating from the late eighteenth century as a theater