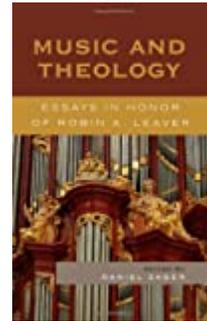




Daniel Zager, ed. *Music and Theology: Essays in Honor of Robin A. Leaver*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2006. vii + 281 pp. \$100.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8108-5414-7.



Reviewed by Tanya Kevorkian (Department of History, Millersville University)

Published on H-German (January, 2008)

New Trends in Music and Theology, Especially in Bach Scholarship

This festschrift observes the sixty-fifth birthday of musicologist, theologian, and conductor Robin A. Leaver. The essays are an appropriate reflection of Leaver's generosity and scholarship. Befitting the honoree's wide-ranging interests, they cover a broad area but can be divided into two main groups. First, and more numerous, are pieces that examine works by Johann Sebastian Bach and place them into a broader musicological context. Kerala Snyder compares chorale settings for organ by Bach and Dieterich Buxtehude, bringing to light various connections among hymnals, hymns, and chorale settings. Gregory Butler argues for the likelihood that Bach performed several specific works at a ceremony in the Leipzig University Church in 1745. The late Anne Leahy offers a beautifully worked out exploration of the interplay between music and text in a case study of Bach's settings of the hymn, "Nun komm der Heiden Heiland." Michael Marissen discusses how the libretti of several church cantatas have been translated (or mistranslated) into English, and barriers to correct translation. Don O. Franklin examines the structure of the *St. Matthew Passion* libretto, finding that Bach and librettist Picander used the Bible commentary of Johannes Olear-

ius as a sort of Cliff Notes. Daniel Melamed's discussion of cues in the performance parts of a 1710 and a 1726 version of the anonymous *St. Mark Passion* serves as a good vehicle to elucidate how Bach revised his works and those of others, and how performance conditions could vary. Albert Clement discusses the religious significance of Bach's triple canon BWV 1076, which is depicted in the 1746 Bach portrait by Elias Gottlob Haussmann. Yo Tomita argues that the *Goldberg Variations* were influenced by a broader context of connections to Dresden, beyond the famous probable inspiration by the insomniac Russian ambassador Hermann Carl von Keyserlingk. Especially interesting here is Tomita's consideration of newly accessible interval canons by two composers active in Dresden, Jan Dismas Zelenka and Johann Joseph Fux, as inspirations for Bach.

The second group of essays relates music and theology in a variety of ways. William T. Flynn discusses Hildegard of Bingen's views of the indispensability of music to religion. Stephen Christ offers a useful overview of the early Lutheran hymnals, church ordinances and related sources in the Kessler Collection at Emory Uni-

versity. Steve Pilkington contrasts Johnny Appleseed's dispersion and "nativization" of the apple tree in America to less "acclimated" Anglican-influenced church music in the United States today. Pilkington's arguments are often humorous and include some good insights. However, he should specify that he is discussing music in historically Anglo-Saxon mainline Protestant churches. Many evangelical/fundamentalist churches (as Pilkington mentions in referring to "contemporary Christian music"), as well as historically African-American, non-Catholic Hispanic, and Catholic churches, in contrast, successfully utilize liturgical music that is a product of developments in the United States. D.E. Saliers offers reflections on the relationship of beauty and terror in theology and in requiems by Benjamin Britten and Gabriel Fauré. Concluding the book is Sherry Vellucci's bibliography of Leaver's vast output in the areas of Bach studies, English church music, hymnody, and theology. Among other things, the bibliography refers to performances that Leaver has planned, an important practical outcome of his research.

Musicologists' expertise lies in working with scores and studies in the field often focus on the specifics of individual compositions. Musicology also possesses the inherent characteristic of explaining in words matters originally expressed musically. These two factors may make many of the essays here somewhat intimidating to the uninitiated. Even so, several essays are easily accessible to readers with no background in music, especially those by Flynn, Christ, Marissen, Melamed, Pilkington, and Saliers. Readers bold enough to work through the other essays will gain many insights into current trends in Bach scholarship. Many of the genres in which Bach composed

are discussed: organ works, cantatas, passions, and keyboard works. Snyder and Tomita inquire in detail about the relationship between Bach's works and those of his contemporaries and predecessors. Leahy, Franklin, and Clement build on the insights of Leaver and other scholars into the theological meaning of Bach's vocal and instrumental music.

Several of the essays, including Butler's, Clement's, and Tomita's, build on speculative hypotheses, which have become prominent in Bach scholarship. We now know much of what can be deduced from the documentary evidence; innumerable details of chronology, structure, liturgical context, and similar features of Bach's oeuvre have been established by generations of meticulous Bach scholarship. However, significant gaps remain in the source base, and it is very tempting to fill in lacunae. Thus, Butler argues that Bach's *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*, BWV 191, was performed at the 1745 ceremony in the University Church, and that Bach also performed some of his organ works then. One of Butler's starting hypotheses, that Bach rather than the regular church organist would have likely played the organ on this occasion, is not convincing. However, much of the rest of Butler's essay is persuasive. In the course of making his argument, he provides numerous insights into practices of organ prelude and Baroque performance more generally. Butler's article, like the other speculative essays, thus helps us to understand performance contexts and practices, compositional methods, and other issues. It makes for worthwhile reading in and of itself, as well as helping one to ponder a variety of questions.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-german>

Citation: Tanya Kevorkian. Review of Zager, Daniel, ed., *Music and Theology: Essays in Honor of Robin A. Leaver*. H-German, H-Net Reviews. January, 2008.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=14087>

Copyright © 2008 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at hbooks@mail.h-net.org.