

The past twenty years have witnessed the beginning of a major international revival of the music of Christoph Graupner, who was a very prolific and successful composer in his day. He is chiefly remembered as the composer who, in 1723, was offered the position of Kantor at the St. Thomas Church in Leipzig but was not allowed by his employer Ernst Ludwig, Landgraf of Hesse-Darmstadt, to leave his position at Darmstadt. Interestingly, this refusal by Ernst Ludwig cleared the way for Johann Sebastian Bach to be hired for that position at the St. Thomas Church.

The son of a tailor, Graupner had a gift for music that was recognized early, and he was sent to be trained at the St. Thomas School in Leipzig. As a young man, he became a friend of Handel and Telemann while playing harpsichord and composing operas for the famed Goose Market Opera in Hamburg. In 1709, Graupner was hired as Vice Kapellmeister. Later, upon the death of his predecessor in 1712, he became Kapellmeister at the court of Ernst Ludwig, Landgraf of Hesse-Darmstadt. Graupner served in this prestigious position for 42 years, until 1754, when failing eyesight forced his retirement. Initially at Darmstadt, Graupner's time was chiefly occupied composing and producing Italian operas for the court. However, after 1719, when financial considerations reduced the large musical forces, he turned his full attention to composing music for the court and chapel. This change in focus resulted in more than 1400 church cantatas and a large amount of instrumental music: 113 symphonies, 50 concertos, 36 sonatas for various instrumental combinations, and a large body of keyboard music.

Although Graupner indicated that all of his manuscripts were to be destroyed upon his death, fortunately for posterity there was a legal battle over who actually owned them—the Landgraf or Graupner's family. It took more than fifty years for the question to be resolved in the courts, at which point all of the interested parties were dead and the prevailing musical styles had changed. And so, Graupner and his music passed into obscurity. However, thanks to this series of events, all of Graupner's manuscripts survived and have been maintained in the State Library in Darmstadt. Their current availability on the Internet allows scholars and performers unprecedented access to his works. Thus, modern technology has made possible an intense investigation of his works, including the compilation of a catalog of his music and the beginnings of the systematic study of this repertory.

The four cantatas chosen for today's program span a twenty-year period of Graupner's cantata output. "*Freuet euch mit den Fröhlichen*," composed in January of 1712 and first performed on January 17, the Second Sunday of Epiphany. It is scored for five singers—two sopranos, alto, tenor, and bass—organ and strings. The text, based on verses from Romans 12, is by Georg Christian Lehms (1684-1717), who had been appointed the court librarian and poet in 1710. He served on the prince's council from 1713 until his early death from tuberculosis in 1717. Lehms was one of Germany's earliest novelists, publishing his first novel in 1707. A collection of his cantata texts was also published, and J. S. Bach used some of Lehms's texts for eleven of his church cantatas.

The large-scale structure of this cantata is based on the alternation of movements setting lines from Romans 12: Movement 1 (Romans 12:15); Movement 3 (Romans 12: 16);

Movement 5 (Romans 12:9), and a repeat of Movement 1 to conclude the cantata. In the first movement, Graupner differentiates the joyful and the weeping by using music that is more florid and animated to represent the joyful and music that is more chromatic and expressive to represent the weeping mood. Between these movements are solo arias setting newly written poetry that expands on the underlying sentiments of the biblical verse. Movement 2 is an aria for soprano I accompanied by an organ solo. Like nearly all of Graupner's solo arias, it is written in the *da capo* form, which consists of two contrasting sections and concludes with a repetition of the opening section, creating, in effect, a three-section work.

Movement 4 is a *da capo* aria for soprano II accompanied by unison violins and continuo (in this case, organ, cello, and bassoon). The use of unison violins to accompany a singer is a texture often found in the Italian opera of the day. Generally, in Graupner's day there was no significant difference in the styles of sacred and secular music.

Movement 6 is a solo aria for bass accompanied by continuo alone, another texture frequently encountered in Italian opera of the period. It is hard to overestimate the influence of Italian opera on the music of the early 18<sup>th</sup> century throughout Europe, with the exception of France. At the time Graupner composed this cantata, he was also composing operas, as well as producing operas by other composers at court.

The cantata, "*Freue dich und sei fröhlich, du Tochter Zion,*" was composed for the First Sunday in Advent and was first performed on December 1, 1720. The text is by Johann Caspar Lichtenberg (1628-1751), who was a celebrated theologian and Lutheran pastor. Graupner would use the cantata texts of Lichtenberg for all of his cantatas after the death of Lehms. One unusual aspect of this cantata is the lack of an alto part. It may be that no alto singer was available on that Sunday. The opening movement for tenor, strings, and continuo sets the text of Zechariah 2:10, with the fourth and sixth movements setting the first and second stanzas, respectively, of the celebrated chorale, "*Wie soll ich dich umfassen.*" The inclusion of familiar chorales was a customary feature of German church cantatas. These chorales would have been well known by those hearing the cantata and brought an added element of meaning to the music.

Of particular interest in this cantata is Movement 3, an accompanied recitative divided between the four voices. While the use of *secco* recitative for voice and continuo and accompanied recitative for voice and strings is common in the German church cantata at this time, it is very unusual for more than one voice to be involved in a single movement. The practice was much more common in the opera of the day and reflected current interest in the Italian opera, as well as presenting these texts in a contemporary style. In the cantata, it also helped to clarify the text and its meaning.

The two chorale settings are separated by an aria for soprano I with two recorders and a recitative and arioso sung by soprano II. These movements allow the poet to expand on the implications of the chorale texts.

The cantata, "*Freuet euch mit den Fröhlichen*," was composed for the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity and was first performed on August 19, 1725. Like the first cantata heard on today's program, this cantata opens with a setting of Romans 12:15. This opening movement is marked to be performed "*alla francese*" (in the French style) and has the feel of a French overture with its dotted rhythms and its sense of grandeur. The use of the oboe to double the first violin part also adds to the French atmosphere of this movement. Unusually, this cantata is scored for two sopranos, alto, and two tenors, accompanied by strings, oboe, bassoon, and organ. While the earlier setting of this text made a great musical difference between joy and weeping, Graupner's music in this setting emphasizes the weeping as the overall mood of the movement. The texts of the arias and recitatives are all newly written by Lichtenberg. The cantata concludes with a setting of the chorale tune, "*Wie schön und lieblich sieht es aus*."

The concluding cantata on today's program, "*Wacht auf, ihr Todten, stehet auf*," was composed for the Twenty-sixth Sunday after Trinity and was first performed on November 21, 1728. The instrumentation includes a trumpet representing the Last Trumpet that announces Judgment Day. The text of the bass aria is that of Matthew 25:34, inviting the righteous to Heaven. In the alto aria, the text comes from Matthew 25:41, which gives voice to the rejoicing of the Saved. The cantata concludes with a presentation of two stanzas of the chorale, "*O Ewigkeit, O Donnerwort*," separated by a marvelous aria for soprano, accompanied by flute, oboe, and two muted violins playing in unison, which creates a magical and colorful effect.

### **From manuscript to music**

One interesting aspect of today's program is the inclusion of cantatas calling for different combinations of voices, instead of the customary SATB combination. We know that the usual practice in Graupner's day was to perform these cantatas with only one or, in special cases, two singers on a part. We can only guess whether Graupner's use of unusual combinations was an artistic choice or a reaction to circumstances, such as a singer's absence from court for reasons of business or illness. As with singers today, these situations certainly arose.

We know that Graupner's singers were highly trained professionals, respected for their accomplishments in both opera and sacred music. Graupner's assistant, his Vice-Capellmeister, Gottfried Grünewald (d. 1739), was his principal bass singer and soloist, as well as an accomplished composer. For many years, sharing the responsibility of producing new cantatas, Graupner and Grünewald alternated the weekly cantata composition. Unfortunately, Grünewald's cantata scores were destroyed at his request upon his death. Presumably, the common production schedule was to compose a cantata a couple of weeks out from its intended performance date, which then allowed a few days for the copying of parts. It is not known how much time was allowed for rehearsal, but, given the professional nature of his singers and instrumentalists, it is not beyond belief that a cantata would receive only a rehearsal or two before its performance.

In the 1725 cantata, “*Freuet euch mit den Fröhlichen*,” there are parts for two tenors, with the second tenor singing one of the recitatives and doubling the other tenor in the opening and concluding ensemble movements. This use of a second singer on a given part is unusual in Graupner’s cantatas. We can only speculate that, lacking a bass voice, he wanted to reinforce the lowest vocal line. Similarly, we know from the surviving individual parts that he would divide recitatives and arias between the first and second sopranos when there are two soprano parts, although they sing the same part together in some sections of the ensemble movements.

The fact that there are surviving vocal and instrumental parts for these wonderful pieces, in addition to the full scores, is a treasure trove for scholars and editors. While Graupner’s scores are beautifully legible for the most part, it is very helpful to be able to cross-check a transcription of the score with the individual parts. Also, the parts tend to include more information about tempo, articulation, and other practical matters, since the performers, including the singers, would play and sing from these parts. Today, it is the practice for singers to sing from a score that includes all the parts rather than only their part.

To illustrate what Graupner’s performers worked from and what we now can work from as this music has been made available online, below, you will see the second tenor part for the 1725 cantata from today’s [program](#).

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a Tenore (Tenor). The score is written on five staves. The first staff is the vocal line, with lyrics in German. The second staff is the vocal line, with lyrics in German. The third staff is the vocal line, with lyrics in German. The fourth staff is the vocal line, with lyrics in German. The fifth staff is the vocal line, with lyrics in German. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and bar lines. There are also some markings like "Accomp." and "tacet" on the fourth and fifth staves. The lyrics are in German and appear to be a religious or liturgical text.