

Johann Sebastian Bach's *Kreuzstab* Cantata (BWV 56): Identifying the Emotional Content of the Libretto

Georg Corall
University of Western Australia

Along with numerous other music theorists of the eighteenth century, Johann Joachim Quantz compares an expressive musical performance to the delivery of a persuasive speech by a distinguished orator. For a successful rhetorical delivery of the music of that period, however, today's musicians not only need to study the score of a work, but they also need to analyse the words of the vocal parts. In the present case study, Johann Sebastian Bach's cantata BWV 56, generally known as the Kreuzstab Cantata, will be investigated in view of its libretto's emotional message, and how it should affect an audience. The secondary literature, which generally ties an understanding of suffering, cross-bearing and an almost suicidal component to the anonymous poet's text, will be reviewed. In particular the term Kreuzstab, its meaning, and its emotional affiliation will be scrutinized. The Doctrine of the Affections (Affektenlehre) and the Doctrine of the Musical-Rhetorical Figures (Figurenlehre) both provide modern-day performers with the necessary tools for a historically informed performance of the music of Bach's time and will help to identify the emotions of Bach's work. Informed by these doctrines, as well as through the distinct definition of the term Kreuzstab, the new understanding of Bach's Cantata BWV 56 will require modern-day performers to contemplate a new approach in their aim of a persuasive delivery in a performance. The analysis of the words of BWV 56 certainly allows for a hopeful and happy anticipation of the salvation rather than a suicidal 'yearning for death'.

Die gute Wirkung einer Musik hängt fast eben so viel von den Ausführrern, als von dem Componisten selbst ab.¹

The good effect of a musical work depends almost as much on the performers, as it does on the composer himself.²

In Johann Joachim Quantz's (1697–1773) discussion about the effects of a musical performance, published in his *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen*, he clearly states that the quality of a composition can be enhanced as well as diminished by the talents (or lack thereof) of a performer.³ Like many of his contemporaries, he compares an expressive musical performance to the delivery of a persuasive speech by a distinguished orator, who aims to guide his listeners through his argument. By writing that the performer shall 'conquer the hearts, excite or calm the passions, and move the audience soon in this, now in that affect',⁴ Quantz

¹ J. J. Quantz, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen*, Berlin, 1752; facsimile reprint, Wiesbaden, Breikopf&Härtel, 1983, p. 100. Cit.: '... sich der Herzen zu bemeistern, die Leidenschaften zu erregen oder zu stillen, und die Zuhörer bald in diesen, bald in jenen Affect zu versetzen.'

² The translations of primary source material are mine unless stated otherwise.

³ Quantz, *Versuch*, p. 175.

⁴ Quantz, *Versuch*, p. 100.

indicates that a vast variety of emotions should be continuously communicated to the listener. Accordingly, it is indispensable for modern-day musicians to fully contemplate the emotional content of the work they wish to perform.

This *Affektenlehre* (the Doctrine of the Affections), as discussed by Quantz and his contemporaries, aided musicians and composers in the eighteenth century, and it also helps modern-day musicians in their aim to perform the music of that period expressively. For today's musicians involved in the historically informed performance (HIP) practice movement, it appears particularly relevant to study this doctrine to comprehend the obligation of moving the audience's passions. Therefore, the modern-day musicians' understanding of an eighteenth-century cantata will be scrutinized.

The work in focus in this investigation is the 'Cantata à Voce Sola e Strumenti', *Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen* (BWV 56), which is one of the few works that was titled 'Cantata' by Johann Sebastian Bach himself. It is generally referred to as the *Kreuzstab* Cantata. Bach set this music to words by an anonymous poet. The secondary literature, which appears to tie an understanding of suffering, cross-bearing and an almost suicidal component to the text, and in particular to the term *Kreuzstab* (and thus to Bach's music), will be reviewed.⁵

Modern-day scholars and performers tend to focus their understanding of the term *Kreuzstab* as that of an allegory of the *Kreuz*; however, the definition for the first word is that of a navigation tool (which will be explored below) and that for the latter is a cross. The secondary literature discussing BWV 56 does not appear to differentiate between these two definitions. In the case of Bach's composition, the latter term is naturally emotionally affiliated with Christ's cross of Passion. Whether the term *Kreuzstab* was chosen by the anonymous eighteenth-century poet to evoke the same emotions in the audience as those of the term *Kreuz* will be questioned in the following investigation.⁶

As Bettina Varwig shows in her article on another of Bach's works — the cantata *Ich habe genug* (BWV 82) — a single word, and even a single emotional connotation, can indeed bear a vast variety of true meanings.⁷ In an attempt to clarify our understanding of the emotional message of Bach's cantata BWV 56, the distinct definition of the term *Kreuzstab* in particular, will offer a different affect to that of the suffering of Christ's Passion. The combined knowledge of *Affektenlehre* and also of *Figurenlehre* (the doctrine of the musical-rhetorical figures),⁸ as well as the analysis of the libretto and the musical score will aid modern-day musicians in their aim for a persuasive delivery of the rhetorical music of the eighteenth century and, in particular, of Bach's cantata BWV 56.

⁵ This research project grew out of the preparation for several public concert performances titled 'Grief & Joy: Emotions in the Music of the Eighteenth Century'. They took place at Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, The University of Western Australia and Northam Townhall, on 25th, 27th and 28th September 2012, respectively. I am also grateful to Johannes Pausch (Hamburg), who made me aware of the *Kreuzstab* as a navigation tool used on sea journeys.

⁶ For a distinction of the emotional message that should be communicated to the listeners, it is of minor relevance if an audience comprises those who attend a concert or a congregation in a liturgical setting.

⁷ B. Varwig, 'Death and Life in J. S. Bach's Cantata *Ich habe genug* (BWV 82)', in *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, vol. 135, no. 2, 2010, pp. 315-356.

⁸ See: D. Bartel, *Musica poetica: musical-rhetorical figures in German Baroque music*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1997.

Affektenlehre – The Doctrine of the Affections

Before engaging in the examination of Bach's *Kreuzstab* Cantata, it appears necessary to establish a general understanding of the perception of *Pathos* and *Affectus* in the early modern period — the passions and affects that Quantz urged the performers to deliver accurately — to fully comprehend the train of thought that might have inspired composers and poets of the Baroque era. Since a composer of a concert in Bach's time was also regularly a performer of his own work, any emotional concept of a particular composition could be easily communicated and explained to the musicians, to ensure its adequate delivery in a performance. Yet, almost three hundred years after the 1726 premiere of Bach's work, today's musicians have the concepts of *Pathos* and *Affectus* less readily (if at all) at their fingertips. Accordingly, modern-day performers who aim for HIP practice need to investigate not only performance-practice issues, such as the appropriate use of period instruments, the question of forces involved and numerous other aspects, but they also need to consider the particular meaning of a given text. Accordingly, a close reading of the musical text of the score, and in the case of Bach's cantata, also of the libretto, is indispensable.

Naturally, this requires an attempt to comprehend early modern perceptions of 'emotions' and their differences to our current understanding in philosophy and psychology. Specific to this discussion, the understanding of affects such as 'sadness' and 'happiness' in the writings of Bach's contemporaries must be explored in order to achieve some historical knowledge. The *Kreuzstab* Cantata serves as an ideal case study of the range of seemingly opposed affects within one particular composition.

In his article on *Affektenlehre* in the Baroque era, Ulrich Thieme points out that modern-day academic philosophers refer to this same period as *Rationalismus*.⁹ He further cites the philosophers of the seventeenth century, including René Descartes (1569–1650), Athanasius Kircher (1601–1680) and Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677), who defined emotions as physical and mechanical reactions within the human body in their search for the rational understanding of their world.

Based on their knowledge from ancient Greek and Roman physicians and philosophers, eighteenth-century intellectuals regarded the emotional predisposition of humans as a combination of their body fluids that, according to their combination ratio, influenced the *humours* (that is the temperament and health of a person). They further explained that these *humours* could — and indeed should — be stimulated by musicians.¹⁰ This already implies a substantial discrepancy to the modern understanding of emotions from a physiological point of view.

Johann Mattheson (1681–1764) — himself a music theorist, composer and performer — wrote extensively on these subjects and offers today's performers insight into the understanding of the correlation between human emotions and

⁹ U. Thieme, 'Die Affektenlehre im philosophischen und musikalischen Denken des Barock – Vorgesichte, Ästhetik, Physiologie', *TIBIA*, Moeck, vol. Sonderdruck, 1984, p. 4.

¹⁰ See: A. Kircher, *Philosophischer Extract und Auszug, aus deß Welt-berühmten Teutschen Jesuitens Athanasii Kircheri von Fulda Musurgia Universali*, Schwäbisch Hall, Hans Reinh. Laidigen, 1662. Available from: www.muenchener-digitalisierungszentrum.de.

musical performance during the eighteenth-century. Although primarily employed as a personal secretary to two successive English ambassadors,¹¹ it is Mattheson's philosophical and musical legacy that presents an indispensable source for musicological enquiry. Hence, he is predominantly known today as one of the most influential German music theorists of the eighteenth century. In addition to his theoretical writings, a substantial number of his own compositions are extant in libraries and archives.

In one of his most comprehensive books, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*,¹² Mattheson discusses extensively the Doctrine of the Affections and the need for each and every composer to be well educated in this science, explaining that anyone who

...will...andere mit der Harmonie rühren, so muß er wahrhaftig alle Neigungen des Herzens, durch blosse ausgesuchte Klänge und deren geschickte Zusammenfügung, ohne Worte dergestalt auszudrücken wissen, daß der Zuhörer daraus, als ob es eine wirkliche Rede wäre, den Trieb, den Sinn, die Meinung und den Nachdruck, mit allen dazu gehörigen Ein- und Abschnitten, völlig begreifen und deutlich verstehen möge.¹³

...wants to touch other [people] with harmony, must truly understand to express all inclinations of the heart¹⁴ without words, by mere selection of sounds and their skillful assembly, such that the listener may completely and clearly understand the impulse, the sense, the meaning and the vigor, with all its related inputs and sections, as if it was a real speech.

Urging his readers with these words to study *Affektenlehre*, Mattheson also offers specific paragraphs on 'sadness', discussing this particular emotion within the field of the affects, and further argues that, in times of sadness, encouragement and consolation is needed, which he implies can be provided through music.¹⁵ He explains that

...[i]n geistlichen Sachen, wo diese Leidenschaft [Traurigkeit] am heilsamsten und beweglichsten ist, gehöret ihr alles zu, was Reu und Leid, Busse, Zerknirschung, Klage und Erkenntniß unsers Elendes in sich hält.¹⁶

¹¹ H.-J. Hinrichsen, *Mattheson, Johann*, in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart: allgemeine Enzyklopädie der Musik*, edited by Finscher Ludwig, 2nd rev. edn, Kassel, Bärenreiter, 1994-2007, Vol. 11, Personenteil. The ambassadors were John Wich and his son Cyril Wich. From 1713 to 1755, Mattheson was the latter's deputy.

¹² J. Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister, 1739: Faksimile-Nachdruck*, Kassel, Bärenreiter, 1987.

¹³ Mattheson, *Capellmeister*, p. 208, § 31.

¹⁴ The German expression *Neigungen des Herzens* refers to the humours or temperaments rather than to the organ that pumps the blood through the veins.

¹⁵ Mattheson, *Capellmeister*, p. 32, §. 30.

¹⁶ Mattheson, *Capellmeister*, p. 17.

...[i]n spiritual matters, where this passion [sadness] is the most beneficial and most nimble, it comprises anything that keeps remorse and sorrow, repentance, contrition, lament and knowledge of our misery in itself.

This appears to prove that early modern philosophers understood a single emotional term such as 'sadness' to include a vast variety of affects that depended on the specific situation. Therefore, it seems viable to assume that the term *Kreuzstab* had more than one emotional affiliation.

Subsequently, in the same paragraph in the *vollkommene Capellmeister*, Mattheson's reader has no doubt that he himself understood 'sadness' to be a fairly universal emotion, when he claims that it is apparently embedded in every person's mental identity. To strengthen his argument, he cites the French writer François de la Mothe le Vayer (1588–1672) who

...gibt...eine artige Ursache, warum die meisten Menschen lieber traurige, als freudige Musik hören, nemlich: weil fast iedermann misvergnügt ist.¹⁷

...presents a good reason, why most people rather prefer to hear sad than joyful music, namely: because almost everybody is ill-pleased.

Earlier on in his chapter, Mattheson cites Kircher and several other early modern intellectuals, who also point out that they understood emotions to be of a physical nature. He continues to argue that "'joy" is felt when our life-spirits expand' and concludes that composers 'best express this affect with wide and augmented intervals'.¹⁸ In his subsequent paragraph, Mattheson argues that according to this understanding, any sad emotion is to be conveyed most appropriately with diatonic or possibly even chromatic steps rather than large interval leaps. When Mattheson defines 'joy', he primarily urges his reader to understand this feeling to be most natural and that (according to his beliefs) it is for the praise of God who ostensibly wants everybody to be happy.¹⁹

These definitions of 'happiness' and 'sadness' seem to be rather general; yet, they also appear to encompass a large amalgamation of emotions. Their 'translation' into music occurs to reflect them as they appear in human behavior, since they also seem to coincide with the general understanding of the *Figurenlehre* as described by Mattheson in his use of different intervals according to the emotional message of a musical composition.

In the following discussion of the term *Kreuzstab* and the subsequent investigation of Bach's *Kreuzstab* Cantata, Mattheson's and his contemporaries' conception of the affects, and subsequently, the performers' need to understand these fully in order to be able to 'move' a modern-day audience, will form the

¹⁷ Mattheson, *Capellmeister*, p. 17.

¹⁸ Mattheson, *Capellmeister*, p. 16, § 56.

¹⁹ Mattheson, *Capellmeister*, pp. 17+18, § 70+71.

foundation for a proposition of an ‘informed delivery’ of the emotion that Bach may have envisaged in his composition.

Kreuzstab – Cross-Staff

Naturally, when interpreting texts from any earlier period in a language that has subsequently undergone centuries of linguistic development, it becomes problematic for the later reader to understand their correct meaning. Not only might the general definition of a particular word have changed over time, but its emotional affiliation within the social context may have also changed. Therefore, even native German speakers can find it a challenging task to comprehend texts of earlier periods, particularly when they aim to read the music of works such as the *Kreuzstab* Cantata accurately.

Despite these difficulties, attempting a genuine interpretation of any libretto is necessary for a convincing musical delivery. Additionally, a basic knowledge of the importance of the Christian faith in European everyday life during the eighteenth century is vital and might enable a more hopeful visualization of the departure from this world as it is anticipated in Bach’s work and, in particular, in the words of the final *Choral* of the *Kreuzstab* Cantata.



Figure 1, Cross-staff: in Petrus Apian, *Introductio Geographica*, Ingolstadt, 1533. Available from: Bayrische Staatsbibliothek München. Sign: 814495 Hbks/R 2 gd. Available from: <http://www.mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn/resolver.pl?urn=urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10806473-1>, (accessed 25 February 2015).

The one word that immediately appears most problematic to comprehend in this work is ‘*Kreuzstab*’. This ‘cross-staff’, also known as *Jakobsstab* (Jacob’s staff),

which can be seen in Figure 1, was used before the invention of the sextant. According to research on scientific instruments undertaken by Maurice Daumas and published in 1972, it 'was reputedly invented by a Jewish astronomer, Levi ben Gerson (1288–1324)';²⁰ whilst Anthony J. Turner notes in his research from 1987 that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries scientists constantly tried to improve this instrument because of its 'highly inaccurate results'. The latter provides photographic evidence of such a cross-staff from as late as 1687, which is held at the Science Museum in London.²¹

In Bach's early life, this tool was primarily used in astronomy and navigation at sea by determining the angles of the stars in relation to the horizon over a particular time frame and at a ship's steady speed. This technique, however, had already been abandoned prior to the eighteenth century since it was an inaccurate and time-consuming procedure. Even though other tools had already replaced the *Kreuzstab* during the seventeenth century, it seems feasible to assume that Bach and his contemporaries were still acquainted with its use and existence, which may also be evident in the 1716 publication (and its reprint from 1752) by Nicolas Bion (1652–1733) that describes this instrument as a measuring and navigation tool.²² Accordingly, it seems safe to conclude that Bach primarily would have thought of such a navigation tool rather than of the cross of Passion when he read the word *Kreuzstab*.

The allegorical use of the term *Kreuzstab* in Bach's cantata can certainly not be denied; however, this word can only be translated as 'cross-staff', 'Jacob's staff', or a 'crosier'. The latter clearly presents a bishop's pastoral staff – a shepherd's staff of a church leader who navigates his 'flock' through the troubles of life. With these definitions in mind, the following analysis of Bach's work and its text aims to shed new light on the possible affects to be communicated to a modern-day audience.

Bach's *Kreuzstab* Cantata

The *Kreuzstab* Cantata is set for solo bass voice and an ensemble comprised of one consort of strings and one of double-reed instruments. The original performing parts (D-B Mus. ms. Bach St 58) and the autograph score (D-B Mus. ms. Bach P 118) that were used for the present inquiry can be found at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz.²³

The surviving performing parts include two copies of *Violino 1* and *Violino 2*, respectively, and one part for *Viola*. For the wind instruments, the following still exist: one part each for *Hautbois 1* and *Hautbois 2*, and one for *Taille [de hautbois]*.²⁴ Lastly, two autonomous parts labeled *Continuo* are extant – one scored in g minor for the first aria, and the other one in f minor for that same opening movement,

²⁰ M. Daumas, *Scientific instruments of the 17th and eighteenth Centuries & their Makers*, London, Batsford, 1972, p. 10.

²¹ A. J. Turner, *Early scientific instruments; Europe 1400–1800*, London, Sotheby's Publications, 1987, pp. 66–67.

²² Cited in: Daumas, *Scientific instruments*, p. 12.

²³ Available from: www.bach-digital.de.

²⁴ That is a tenor oboe in f, not to be confused with an *oboe da caccia*, which is generally scored as a solo instrument rather than a consort instrument.

which indicates that this latter part was intended for the performance on an organ that was tuned at a higher pitch (*Chorton*) than that of the other instruments (*Cammerton*), and which accordingly had to be notated as a transposing part.²⁵

Since the instrumentation includes a double-reed consort as well as a string ensemble of equal standing (that is, with only the violins doubled), it seems feasible to assume that a bassoon was included in the wind consort, as well as some kind of bowed bass instrument in the string ensemble. Recalling Johann Gottfried Walther's definition of a *basson* as the 'ordinaire Bass' (the common bass), it might even be plausible to assume that the use of a double-reed bass was indeed more common than scoring for a string bass.²⁶

According to Matthias Wendt in his critical commentary to the *Neue-Bach-Ausgabe*,²⁷ it also seems most likely that the extant bass parts were meant for the organ and the bassoon, respectively, since the solo accompaniment of the string bass, as noted in the score, is not to be found in either of these parts. Only the final *Choral* of this work requires three additional singers (who comprise an all-male trio of a soprano, an alto, and a tenor) to join the *Capelle*.²⁸ Probably composed in the autumn of 1726, this cantata was premiered on the 19th Sunday after Trinity, which fell on 27 October.²⁹

There are five movements to the *Kreuzstab* Cantata, namely (in the order of their appearance) an *Aria*, a *Recitativo*, a second *Aria*, a second *Recitativo* and the final *Choral*. The first movement engages the entire instrumental ensemble and the solo bass singer; both recitatives involve the soloist and the basso continuo group, the second recitative also the strings; the second aria is scored for solo oboe along with the soloist and the bass instruments; and the concluding chorale requires the entire *Capelle* including all four of the singers.

It is crucial for an informed performance of this cantata to fully understand the text. Therefore, the original German words by an anonymous poet, as well as a translation of this libretto provided by the current author (but guided by those of Dürr and also of Richard Douglas Jones)³⁰ are presented here:

1 ARIA

Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen,
er kömmt von Gottes lieber Hand.
Der führet mich nach meinen Plagen
zu Gott in das gelobte Land.
Da leg ich den Kummer auf einmal ins
Grab,

1 ARIA

I will gladly carry the cross-staff,
it comes from God's dear hand.
It leads me after my torments
to God into the Promised Land.
Then I lay my sorrows at once into
the grave,

²⁵ See: B. Haynes, 'Johann Sebastian Bach's Pitch Standarts: the Woodwind Perspective', *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society*, vol. No. 11, 1985, pp. 5–114.

²⁶ J. G. Walther, *Musicalisches Lexicon oder Musicalische Bibliothek*, Leipzig, Wolfgang Deer, 1732; facsimile reprint, Kassel, Basel, Bärenreiter, 1986, p. 79.

²⁷ M. Wendt, *Johann Sebastian Bach: Kantaten zum 18. und 19. Sonntag nach Trinitatis, Kritischer Bericht*, Kassel, Basel, London, New York, Bärenreiter, Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1991, pp. 162–187.

²⁸ See: A. Parrott, *The Essential Bach Choir*, Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK; Rochester, NY, Boydell Press, 2000.

²⁹ W. Schmieder, *Thematisch-systematisches Verzeichnis der musikalischen Werke von Johann Sebastian Bach: Bach-Werke-Verzeichnis (BWV)*, 2nd edn., Wiesbaden, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1990, p. 89.

³⁰ See: A. Dürr, *The cantatas of J. S. Bach: with their librettos in German-English parallel text*, Edited by Richard Douglas Jones, Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press, 2005.

da wischt mir die Tränen mein
Heiland selbst ab.

2 RECITATIVO

Mein Wandel auf der Welt
ist einer Schifffahrt gleich:
Betrübnis, Kreuz und Not
sind Wellen, welche mich bedecken
und auf den Tod mich täglich
schrecken;
mein Anker aber, der mich hält,
ist die Barmherzigkeit,
womit mein Gott mich oft erfreut.
Der ruft so zu mir:
Ich bin bei dir,
ich will dich nicht verlassen noch
versäumen!
Und wenn das wütenvolle Schäumen
sein Ende hat,
so tret ich aus dem Schiff in meine
Stadt,
die ist das Himmelreich,
wohin ich mit den Frommen
aus vielem Trübsal werde kommen.

3 ARIA

Endlich, endlich wird mein Joch
wieder von mir weichen müssen.
Da krieg ich in dem Herren Kraft,
da hab ich Adlers Eigenschaft,
da fahr ich auf von dieser Erden
und laufe sonder matt zu werden.
O gescheh es heute noch!

4 RECITATIVO

Ich stehe fertig und bereit,
das Erbe meiner Seligkeit
mit Sehnen und Verlangen
von Jesus' Händen zu empfangen.
Wie wohl wird mir geschehn,
wenn ich den Port der Ruhe werde
sehn:
Da leg ich den Kummer auf einmal ins
Grab,
da wischt mir mein Heiland die
Tränen selbst ab.

then my Saviour will wipe off my
tears himself.

2 RECITATIVO

My wander in this world
is equal to a sea voyage:
sorrow, affliction [cross], and distress
are waves that cover me
and daily terrify me to death;
but my anchor that holds me
is the mercy
with which my God often gladdens
me.
He calls to me thus:
I am with you,
I will neither leave nor forsake you!
And when the stormy foaming
comes to an end,
I shall disembark from the ship into
my city, which is the Kingdom of
Heaven,
wherein with the devout
I shall come out of much affliction.

3 ARIA

Finally, finally, my yoke must recede
from me again.
Then I shall gain strength in the Lord,
then I shall be like an eagle,
then I shall mount up from this earth
and run without getting tired.
Oh may it happen this very day!

4 RECITATIVO

I stand ready and prepared
to receive my inheritance of salvation
with longing and yearning
from Jesus's hands.
What welfare will happen to me
when I shall see the port of rest:
then I lay my sorrows at once into the
grave,
then my Saviour will wipe off my
tears himself.

5 CHORAL

Komm, O Tod, du Schlafes Bruder,

komm und führe mich nur fort;
 löse meines Schiffleins Ruder,
 bringe mich an sichern Port!
 Es mag, wer da will, dich scheuen,
 du kannst mich vielmehr erfreuen;
 denn durch dich komm ich herein
 zu dem schönsten Jesulein.

5 CHORAL

Come, oh Death, thou brother of sleep,

come and lead me forth;
 loosen my little ship's rudder,
 bring me to a secure port!
 Let whoever so wishes shun you:
 you can rather gladden me;
 for through you I come therein
 to the most lovely Jesus.

The author of this text is unknown, and a number of scholars have commented on its relation (or apparent lack thereof) to the Scripture lesson for the 19th Sunday after Trinity. Alfred Dürr, in his comprehensive and still seminal volume on Bach's cantatas, is amongst the group of scholars who do not seem to understand the discrepancy between the Scripture lesson and the anonymous author's text as problematic. He states that the healing of the paralytic³¹ — the subject of reflection in the service for the 19th Sunday after Trinity — is not 'specifically mentioned' in the libretto. Nevertheless, he interprets the first movement of BWV 56 as a description of God's forgiveness, which was granted to the paralytic and to any believer who is willing to bear life's burden.³²

It is noteworthy to draw attention to the fact that the scribe of the performance parts for the solo bass, and also Johann Sebastian Bach himself in his score,³³ generally used shorthand spelling to write the word *Kreuzstab* by using an X for *Kreuz*, as can be seen in Fig. 2. This shows the undeniable double entendre that creates the relation to the cross of Christ's Passion.

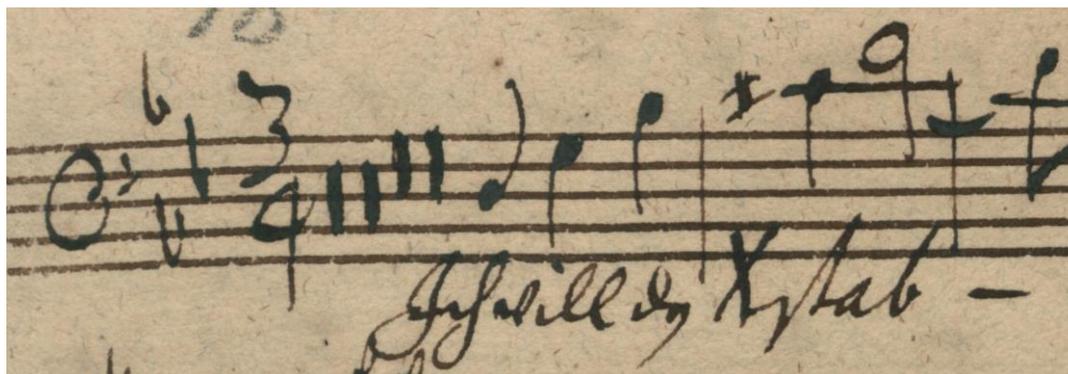


Figure 2, Excerpt from performance part: bass solo voice (D-B Mus. ms. Bach St 58). Available from: <http://www.bach-digital.de> (accessed 2 March 2015).

Several other musicologists than Dürr describe the libretto as problematic.

³¹ Mt. 9:1–12.

³² A. Dürr, *Die Kantaten von Johann Sebastian Bach*, 4th edn., München, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1981, pp. 477–480.

³³ Wendt, *Johann Sebastian Bach: Kantaten*, p. 172.

For example, his investigation on 'Death, Deliverance, and Discipleship in the Music of Bach' reveals musicologist Calvin Stapert to be among those scholars who claim that the author of the text apparently ignored any relation to the Scripture lesson. Furthermore, he asserts that his reading of the text presents 'too much yearning for death, especially in a cantata that is ostensibly about cross-bearing, about self-sacrifice'.³⁴ This allegation is pertinent to this discussion. Today's performers, therefore, must determine if their understanding of the constant suffering of the Christian people, extracted, as the cardinal message of this cantata's text, is indeed the principal and also the only interpretation available today.

Ute Poetzsch-Seban provides the Scripture lesson's text for the 19th Sunday after Trinity in her book *Die Kirchenmusik von Georg Philipp Telemann und Erdmann Neumeister*.³⁵ It appears that the healing of a paralytic is indeed the cardinal message of the gospel; yet, the opening words she cites from Matthew 9, 1-8 are as follows:

Da trat er in das Schiff, und fuhr wieder herüber, und kam in seine Stadt.³⁶

Then he embarked onto the ship, and he travelled over again, and he came into his city.

These words are almost identical to those at the end of the second movement of Bach's cantata and prove that the anonymous author certainly did not ignore the Scripture lesson altogether.

The Bach scholar Hans-Joachim Schulze also comments on the author's neglect of the presentation of the Scripture lesson. He considers that any reference to the healing of the paralytic for that particular Sunday of the liturgical year is 'quite apparently missing'.³⁷ Schulze argues, however, that the author of the libretto appears to have wanted to place the text's emphasis on the 'certainty of faith' and the 'forgiveness of sins' rather than on the story described in the gospel.³⁸ He agrees that today's scholars have struggled to discover the origins of the opening words of the first movement of Bach's work. He also suggests, as do several other scholars, that clear evidence exists to support the inspirational influence of a text written by Erdmann Neumeister (1671–1756) in 1702, who according to Robin A. Leaver was 'the architect of the reform cantata that employed *secco* recitative and the *da capo* aria, both self-consciously borrowed from opera'.³⁹

The title of this work, set to music by Georg Philipp Telemann (1681–1767), is: *Ich will den Kreuzweg gerne gehen* (TWV 1:884) – I will gladly walk the Way of the

³⁴ C. Stapert, *My Only Comfort: Death, Deliverance, and Discipleship in the Music of Bach*, Grand Rapids, Mich., W.B. Eerdmans, 2000, p. 195.

³⁵ U. Poetzsch-Seban, *Die Kirchenmusik von Georg Philipp Telemann und Erdmann Neumeister: zur Geschichte der protestantischen Kirchenkantate in der ersten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Thesis (doctoral), Universität Halle/Wittenberg, 2003, Ortus, 2006.

³⁶ Poetzsch-Seban, *Die Kirchenmusik*, p. 358.

³⁷ H.-J. Schulze, *Die Bach-Kantaten: Einführungen zu sämtlichen Kantaten Johann Sebastian Bachs*, Edition Bach-Archiv Leipzig, Leipzig, Stuttgart, Evangelische Verlagsanstalt; Carus-Verlag, 2006, p. 455.

³⁸ Schulze, *Die Bach-Kantaten*.

³⁹ Cit.: R. A. Leaver, 'Religion and Religious Currents', in Raymond Erickson (ed.), *The Worlds of Johann Sebastian Bach*, New York, Amadeus Press, 2009.

Cross (or: the Stations of the Cross). In pointing out this reputed correlation to the text by Neumeister, however, the primary, and apparently singular, message of Bach's cantata is again emphasized on the cross as the burden of any Christian.

Additionally, Martin Petzoldt briefly comments on Bach's *Kreuzstab* Cantata in his article in the third volume of *Die Welt der Bach-Kantaten* and also seems to favour the interpretation of the cross-staff as a symbol of the cross of the Passion.⁴⁰ He cites Johannes Olearius (1611–1684), who apparently 'introduced' the term *Kreuzstab* in relation to Jesus' cross. Olearius indeed uses the term *Creutz-Stab* [sic] in relation to God's power, as seen in the action through Moses' hands over the waters of the Red Sea. He says:

Der Creutz-Stab [...] weiset uns den Weg. [...] und führt uns durchs rothe Meer der Tauffe ins Leben.⁴¹

The cross-staff shows us the path. [...] and leads us through the red sea of baptism into life.

The second reference given by Petzoldt reads in the original as follows, where Olearius describes the *Creutz-Stab* as the *Wunder-Stab* (the miracle-staff):

...welcher das rothe Meer getheilet, [...] das bittere Wasser versüset, [hat].⁴²

...which split the red sea, [...] sweetened the water [...].

The allegorical relation to Christ's cross of Passion may be evident in these words; yet, the reference to the sea and the navigation through the troubles of life appears to be undeniable. Thus, it is even more important to remind today's performers of the initial meaning of this word – the cross-staff as a navigation tool. It seems that this is the only definition that has not been mentioned by any of the current scholars; although, it is likely the primary one that would have come to people's minds in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Consequently, through the accumulated knowledge of the basic rules of *Affektenlehre* in combination with aspects of *Figurenlehre*, a few musical aspects of Bach's composition will be investigated, to support this understanding of the term *Kreuzstab* and its affect.

As pointed out by numerous musicologists, the second movement of Bach's cantata indicates a ship journey in its words and also in its musical setting. Fig. 3 shows that along with the repeated notes of the basso continuo part, the string bass

⁴⁰ M. Petzoldt, 'Theologische Aspekte der Leipziger Kantaten Bachs', in Christoph Wolff (ed.), *Die Welt der Bach-Kantaten*, 3 vols., Stuttgart, Kassel, Metzler, Bärenreiter, 1999, Vol. 3. Petzoldt refers to: J. Olearius, *Biblische Erklärung*, Leipzig, Salfelden, 1678. Available from: www.books.google.de, (accessed 20 November 2014). Petzoldt claims that '...certain characteristic conceptualisations undoubtedly originate from the Olearius-Bible, such as "Crosier" (see: BWV 56/1, Olearius I, 446a and 734b); ...bestimmte charakteristische Begriffsbildungen entstammen unzweifelhaft der Olearius-Bibel, so z.B. "Kreuzstab" (vgl. BWV 56/1; Olearius I, 446a und 734b).

⁴¹ Olearius, *Biblische Erklärung*, vol. I, p. 446a.

⁴² Olearius, *Biblische Erklärung*, vol. I, p. 734b.

(that exists in the manuscript score but not in the parts used for this article) presents arpeggios that can be interpreted as the waves at sea. Toward the end of this recitative, coinciding with the words 'And when the stormy foaming comes to an end, I shall disembark from the ship into my city', this ongoing sound painting ceases for a regular *secco* recitative representing the anticipated arrival at 'the port of rest' that appears in the words of the final *Choral* (see Fig. 4).

Figure 3 shows the first three bars of the second movement. The Bass part is a recitative with the lyrics: "Mein Wan-del auf der Welt ist ein-ner Schiff-fahrt gleich:". The Violoncello and Continuo parts provide accompaniment with arpeggiated figures.

Figure 3, Bars 1–3 of 2nd movement after autograph score (D-B Mus. ms. Bach P 118). Available from: <http://www.bach-digital.de>.

Figure 4 shows bars 14-17 of the second movement. The Bass part has the lyrics: "Und wenn das wü - ten - vol - le Schäu-men ein En - de hat, so tret ich aus dem Schiff in mei-ne Stadt,". The accompaniment continues with arpeggiated figures.

Figure 4, Bars 14–17 of 2nd movement after autograph score (D-B Mus. ms. Bach P 118). Available from: <http://www.bach-digital.de>.

Whereas this is generally given as the only evidence of the sea journey, it appears that this recitative is but a logical consequence to the opening aria that already introduced the idea of a voyage to the afterlife, yet, with the allegorical connotation of Jesus' cross of Passion.

Figure 5 shows bars 17-28 of the first movement. The Bass part has the lyrics: "Ich will den X- stab ger - ne - tra - - - - - gen den X- stab_". The music features a melodic line with some grace notes and a steady accompaniment.

Figure 5, Bars 17–28 of 1st movement after autograph part (D-B Mus. ms. Bach St 58). Available from: <http://www.bach-digital.de>.

Redirecting the focus to this opening movement of Bach's cantata BWV 56, and in particular to the first word of that aria, it seems that the accumulated knowledge of *Affektenlehre*, Mattheson's brief comments on *Figurenlehre*, and the definition of the term *Kreuzstab* indeed bear more attributes of a positive journey

rather than the suffering of the cross of the Passion. As already mentioned, in this aria, the text clearly states that the *Kreuzstab* 'leads (or guides) me after my torments to God into the Promised Land'. In particular, the first five notes sung by the soloist (larger intervals leaping into the leading note) can be interpreted as the joyful wish to carry this cross-staff—that navigation instrument that will lead through the burden of life to happiness. The eight-bar melisma on the word 'tragen' (to carry) appears to represent the ongoing carrying and leading of the *Kreuzstab*.

The third movement (the aria with bass voice, solo oboe, and basso continuo) emphasizes the joy of the awareness that the burden of life will soon be taken away. In light of a more positive outlook of the afterlife, this may present far less 'too much yearning for death' in sadness of the misery of a present life rather than the wish that the unification with the Saviour 'may happen this very day'.

Additionally, the words of the following recitative continue to describe the joyful anticipation of the transition into the afterlife. At the end of this recitative, the anonymous poet and also Bach repeat the final phrase of the first aria, reminding the listener that 'then I lay my sorrows at once into the grave, then my Saviour will wipe off my tears himself' focusing on the consolation given by Jesus.

The text of the final *Choral* of Bach's work again reflects on the sea voyage, and provides the audience with the positive anticipation of a death within the Christian faith that is a joyful 'yearning' to be united with Jesus in the afterlife. This positive *Affekt* essentially contradicts Staperts almost suicidal 'yearning for death'. Although, the first syncopated chord of this *Choral*—this premature arrival before the beat—could be interpreted as a longing and the anticipation of death, the final c major chord at the end of the entire cantata seems to represent the positive resolution and unity with Jesus Christ subsequent to a life in this world.

Conclusion

As presented above, a close look at a variety of details of any of Bach's compositions is indispensable for the comprehension of the true message that might have been the subject of eloquence to an eighteenth-century audience and may also be to the listeners in a modern performance situation. Indeed, there will always be an emotional level that may or may not be possible to describe, and which most likely was not the primary message — if any at all — that a poet and a composer had in mind when creating their works almost three hundred years ago. Scrutinising our current understanding and comparing it with evidence of eighteenth-century ideology, however, proves that the investigation of a level of understanding, that is far beyond the general approach to Bach's music, can offer an interpretation that prioritises an emotional outcome that is substantially different to the one that comes to mind at first glance.

Evidently, the term *Kreuzstab* appears to have been used in an allegorical sense in this libretto (at least in part) and may have led an eighteenth-century audience (just as it leads a modern audience) to imagining the *Kreuz* — the cross and burden of life — and to hear the sadness in the first movement of Bach's composition. Nevertheless, in view of the 'translation' of the term *Kreuzstab*, as suggested earlier in this article, it appears quite plausible to shift the singular emotional message of the first movement of Bach's cantata, from one of lamenting

sadness and suffering, to a pluralistic and positive outlook that almost programmatically describes a joyful ship-journey from this world into the next world—the place where, according to Bach’s and his contemporaries’ belief, the Christian faith offers an eternal afterlife and the unification with their Saviour.

Moreover, Bach’s use of large intervals for the first words of the opening *Aria*, seems to coincide with Mattheson’s writing on ‘joy’ rather than on ‘sadness’; the first which should, according to him, be better presented with large intervals and leaps, and the latter with stepwise diatonic or possibly chromatic passages.⁴³

Naturally, this interpretation requires today’s performers to re-consider their delivery, and to prove their talent to ensure that the quality of this composition is enhanced rather than diminished — the danger that Quantz so profoundly cautioned his reader to contemplate.

⁴³ See also: *Passus duriusculus* in: Bartel, *Musica poetica*, pp. 357–358.

Author Biography

Dr Georg Corall began his tertiary studies in recorder and harpsichord at the Hochschule der Künste, Berlin, and concluded studies of historical oboe instruments and recorder with Renate Hildebrand at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater 'Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy', Leipzig. He also holds a teaching degree in historical woodwinds from the Hochschule für Musik, Hamburg. He completed his practical education at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis (Switzerland) from 1996 to 1998 in Baroque oboe with Michel Piguet, Baroque bassoon with Claude Wassmer, and harpsichord with Massimiliano Rasschetti.

Georg successfully completed his academic studies for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts at The University of Western Australia (UWA) in 2013. At this university, he was awarded the John Hind Scholarship in his first year of study and was further UWA's inaugural recipient of the Vice-Chancellor's 'Harpsichord Scholarship'. Most recently, Georg has been granted a scholarship from Monash University in Melbourne for his newly-commenced studies for a PhD in musicology.

In addition to his own ensembles (*les hautboïstes de prusse* and *Perth Baroque*), Georg has performed and recorded with a plethora of international musicians, including Hans-Martin Linde, Joshua Rifkin, Herman Max, Holger Eichhorn and Gerhard Schmidt-Gaden; and ensembles, such as Cappella Coloniensis, Orchester der Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, Aradia Baroque Toronto, Tölzer Knabenchor, Montréal Baroque and Musicalische Compagnie Berlin.

For more information, please visit: www.georgcorall.com.

In Memoriam of Philippa Maddern

Without Philippa's support throughout my doctoral candidature, and also after my graduation, my artistic as well as my academic life would have been far less exciting. It was a great honour to be invited to perform with my newly founded ensemble Perth Baroque at the opening ceremony for the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions. Furthermore, it also gave me great joy to contribute as a performer, teacher and academic writer in the ZEST Festival. If it was not for Philippa's and the centre's support, this article, which grew out of a concert series titled 'Grief & Joy: Emotions in the Music of the 18th Century', would never have been written.