

ALUMNI AND EXTERNALS IN THE CHOIRS OF THE THOMAS SCHOOL DURING BACH'S TIME

Andreas Glöckner

Since the 1980s there have been lively debates about the vocal and instrumental forces used in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century music; in particular, the question of the vocal and instrumental forces used for Bach's Leipzig ensemble works has been the subject of great controversy. Quite a few of the relevant documents have received contradictory interpretations, as is evident in the dispute¹ about Bach's "Entwurff einer wohlbestallten Kirchen *Musik*" of 23 August 1730.² An extensive evaluation of all pertinent sources—in particular, those regarding the organizational structures of the St. Thomas choral program and the contextual circumstances of Bach's performances—is still pending.³ The current discussion also sometimes overlooks the fact that the choral circumstances at St. Thomas were not principally different from those at other central German choir schools such as those in Freiberg, Dresden, Grimma, Meissen, or Pforta. In addition, it appears methodically problematic to assume that, with regard to the performance of figural music,

¹The discussion of Bach's vocal ensemble scoring was started during the early 1980s by the American musicologist Joshua Rifkin. Since then numerous contributions to this subject (mostly by Rifkin himself) have been published. See also Andrew Parrott, "Bachs Chor: Ein 'Kurtzer, iedoch höchstnöthiger Entwurff' zur Neubewertung," *Bachwoche Ansbach* (1995): 25–34; (1997): 51–84; and Parrott, *The Essential Bach Choir*, Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2000; German edition: "Bachs Chor. Zum neuen Verständnis," trans. by Claudia Brusdeylins, Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2003 (an extensive bibliography of the pertinent literature, which should receive a general mention here, may be found on pages 213–18).

²*Bach-Dokumente*, supplement to *Neue Bach Ausgabe* (henceforth *Dok.*), vol. I, no. 22.

³This is the subject of an exhaustive study to be completed during the coming years at the Bach Archiv Leipzig.