

THE BACH-SCHEIBE CONTROVERSY: NEW DOCUMENTATION

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In 1974, George J. Buelow presented sound arguments for reversing commonly accepted views about the anonymous criticism of Johann Sebastian Bach's church music in the sixth issue of Johann Adolph Scheibe's *Critische Musicus* (hereafter "CM"). And yet, a quarter century later, matters were much the same, as Buelow observed:

Almost every Bach scholar since Spitta has disparaged Scheibe's remarks about Bach, and Scheibe's credibility as a music critic and theorist has in effect been greatly diminished, and his major theoretical statements, including the bulk of the *Critische Musikus*, consequently neglected.¹

In Philipp Spitta's view:

Scheibe was ambitious and jealous; he had "agitated" against Bach ever since, and had stirred up, or, at any rate promoted a tide of

¹"In Defence of J. A. Scheibe against J. S. Bach," *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 101 (1974/5): 85–100. (*Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* does not include this article in its bibliography for Scheibe [2nd edition (1994), 14:1205].) G. J. Buelow, "Scheibe" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrell (London: Macmillan, 2001), 22:445 ff. The subject article appears in *Johann Adolph Scheibens Critischer Musikus* (CM2), complete edition (Leipzig: Bernhard Christoph Breitkopf, 1745), 55–65 at 62. The first edition, a reprint of the individual issues (Hamburg: T. von Wierings Erben, and R. Beneke, 1738–1740) is entitled *Der critische Musicus* (CM1). Writings in the controversy are partially reprinted in *Bach-Dokumente* (BD), eds. W. Neumann and H.-J. Schulze (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1969), II, nos. 400, 409, 413, 417, 420, 441, 442, 533, 552; and *The New Bach Reader* (NBR), eds. Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel; rev. and enlarged by Christoph Wolff (New York: Norton, 1998), 337–53.