

*Bachs lateinische Kirchenmusik* (*Das Bach-Handbuch*, vol. 2). Editors, Reinmar Emans and Sven Hiemke (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 2007)

This book is part of the seven-volume *Bach-Handbuch* currently being published by Laaber-Verlag. As usual with such large-scale projects, the series has been unfolding at a leisurely pace, starting more than a decade ago with a *Bach-Lexikon* (a collection of brief reference articles from A to Zippelfagottist) and proceeding through Bach's works by genre. Four books have come out so far. Three more are in preparation. One entire book is devoted to the cantatas, and another to the keyboard music: the latter grew to 1,128 pages and had to be issued in two separate volumes. Bach composed so relatively little Latin-texted music that it is surprising at first to see it given its own volume. The repertoire can be summed up in a brief list: the Magnificat, the handful of Lutheran Masses and Sanctus settings, and the project now known as the Mass in B minor. Laaber's single-volume format certainly allows for unhurried discussion of individual works. The editors have also taken the opportunity to include two extra chapters on matters of performance practice ("*Bachs Ausführungsbedingungen und Bachs Instrumentarium*"), as well as an essay on Bach's historical context ("*Kirchenmusik in den sächsischen Metropolen*") and a promising but too-short reflection on "*Bach und die Parodie.*"

The best part of the book is, rather surprisingly, the tangential material. Bernd Heyder contributes a very informative 70-page guide to Bach's instrumental palette and how it was used in practice. He also does a good job of untangling the web of conflicting evidence about Bach's singers and how they performed. He sums up the issues at hand while avoiding the polemical excesses of many of the authors he cites. (His own view on Bach's choir, which he gives as a modest afterthought: the usual ideal seems from the existing documentation to have been a double quartet with four concertists and four ripienists, but the day-to-day reality was most often one-to-a-part performance.) The sub-chapters on reception history are also worth a read. Friedrich Sprondel has some interesting things to say about the reception of the Magnificat—we discover that it was dismissed by an early Bach biographer as "*leer und öde,*" and by a 19th-century American music critic as "*possessing no dramatic character and incapable of conveying*