

THE FORMATION OF BACH'S MOTIFS:
CHAPTER TWO OF ANDRÉ PIRRO'S
L'ESTHÉTIQUE DE JEAN-SÉBASTIEN BACH

Translated by Joe Armstrong

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

As the study of text-music relations in Bach's music has become increasingly sophisticated, it is easy to dismiss early ventures in the field as facile. Among these are Albert Schweitzer's *J. S. Bach le musicien poète* (1905) and André Pirro's *L'Esthétique de Jean-Sébastien Bach* (1907). Of the two, Schweitzer's is the better known, no doubt because it appeared almost immediately in both German and English translations (1908 and 1911, respectively) and has been steadily reprinted since then.

It is unfortunate that Pirro is so little known in the English-speaking world. While Pirro's dates for the cantatas must be read with caution, his comments on the music are insightful and well worth consideration by the modern reader. In 1957, when Mervyn Savill translated André Pirro's 1906 biography of J. S. Bach, he wrote:

André Pirro (1869–1943) is considered one of the most important figures in the field of musicology of our time. Born in Saint-Dizier, France, he studied law and letters and attended the organ classes of César Franck at the Paris Conservatory. Later a member of the directing committee of the Schola Cantorum, in 1912 he succeeded Romain Rolland as Professor of Musical History at the Sorbonne. Of Pirro, *A Dictionary of Modern Music and Musicians* says: "The historic and artistic value of his works and the spirit animating them reveal him as one of the most striking personalities among musicologists."

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