

JOHANN CHRISTOPH BACH'S NEW ORGAN FOR EISENACH'S GEORGENKIRCHE¹

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INTRODUCTION

The organ built 1696–1707² under Johann Christoph Bach's direction for the Georgenkirche in Eisenach has long been of interest to Bach scholars. Because of the parallels that can be drawn between Christoph Bach's project and Johann Sebastian Bach's own proposal for renovations in Mühlhausen, it has been suggested that Sebastian Bach must have learned much about the art of organ building from Christoph Bach in Eisenach, whether while he was still a child and living in Eisenach, or afterward from visits one assumes he must have made to examine and play the new organ.³ The organ took on more topical interest when its disposition was recreated in the Bach organ built by Gerald Woehl in 2000 for the Thomaskirche in Leipzig.

Johann Christoph Bach (1624–1703) was appointed town organist in Eisenach in 1665. He or his assistant was expected to be present for all services on Sundays, feasts, and celebratory days, as well as on weekdays, and to play the organ during *choraliter* as well as

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²Most of the organ had been built by 1703, the year Johann Christoph Bach died; final examination of the organ took place in June 1707.

³See Hans Löffler, "J. S. Bachs Orgelprüfungen," *Bach-Jahrbuch* (1925): 93–100, and "J. S. Bach und die Orgeln seiner Zeit" in *Bericht über die dritte Tagung für deutsche Orgelkunst in Freiberg/Sachsen* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1928), 122–32; Peter Williams, *The Organ Music of J. S. Bach*, Vol. 3: *A Background* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 123; and Christoph Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach* (Norton: New York and London, 2000), 30.