



## Bach and Recorders in G

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have been investigated in the non-steady state case, probably the cause of trombonists' problems with the common rotary valve.

ARNOLD MYERS AND RAYMOND PARKS

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BACH AND RECORDERS IN G

In his essay for *GSJ* XLVII ('On the Pitch Dispositions of Bach's *Fiauti d'Echo* and other Treble Recorders', pp.155–60), Tushaar Power has provided the most detailed argument to date for J. S. Bach's possible use of recorders pitched in G. Power hoped ultimately to help identify Bach's elusive *Fiauti d'Echo* in the Fourth Brandenburg Concerto and, as a corollary, to shed more light on all of Bach's works that include treble recorders. Unfortunately, however, with its rather high number of errors, his discussion only casts greater confusion on our understanding of Bach and the recorder.

The main problem is that the foundations on which Power's conclusions are built are often faulty or plainly false. I am also disappointed to have to say that nearly all of these errors, large and small, could have been avoided by reporting information accurately from the secondary literature, particularly from my essay (cited in Power at p.159, n.6), 'Organological Questions and their Significance in J. S. Bach's Fourth Brandenburg Concerto', *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society* 17 (1991), pp.5–52 – hereafter 'Marissen, *JAMIS*.'

Power's central point is that the Bach treble recorder lines descending only to notated *g'* and containing notated *f#'''* were probably meant for recorders pitched in G (i.e., on a recorder in G, the notated *g'* would be fingered as an *f'* on a recorder in F, and the technically problematic *f#'''* as an unproblematic *e'''*). The parts in question, according to Power,

include the single recorder in *Himmelskönig, sei willkommen*, BWV 182, and the first recorder lines in *Es ist nichts Gesundes an meinem Leibe*, BWV 25; *Komm, du süße Todesstunde*, BWV 161a; and the Fourth Brandenburg Concerto, BWV 1049.

To get this argument to work, Power first excludes the possible relevance of Bach's *fiauto piccolo* parts (as explained in Marissen, *JAMIS*, pp. 7–10, '*fiauto*' without a '*traversa*' specification of some sort always means recorder in the Bach autographs), considers dubious the recorder lines in *Gleichwie der Regen und Schnee vom Himmel fällt*, BWV 18, and notes that some of the *colla parte* lines for recorders in final chorale movements often exceed the upper and lower registers of the instrument (i.e., he considers relevant only those parts that Bach expressly composed for treble recorder).

In fact Bach's *colla parte* lines for recorders in final chorale movements never exceed the range of the instruments. Some writers have claimed so only because the 'Old Bach Edition' (*Gesamtausgabe der Bachgesellschaft*, Leipzig, 1851–99), and subsequent editions based on it, failed to specify the special octave placements of these lines in the way that they are notated in Bach's original performance parts. The 'New Bach Edition' (*Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke* [*Neue Bach-Ausgabe*, or 'NBA'], Kassel and Leipzig, 1954–) corrects this problem (concerning the *colla parte* lines for recorders, see also Marissen, *JAMIS*, pp.10–11, fn.13). It is true that not all of the cantatas have been published yet in the NBA, but one can easily gather reliable information on octave placement of instrumental chorale lines from the respective entries in *Bach Compendium: Analytischbibliographisches Repertorium der Werke Johann Sebastian Bachs*, ed. Hans-Joachim Schulze and Christoph Wolff (Frankfurt, 1985–).

The recorder lines in Cantata 18 are not dubious. Under Bach's full supervision, they were added in the 1720s to double the viola I and II lines in a Leipzig performance of this cantata (which had been composed in Weimar). Power (p.160, n.8; citing NBA I/vii, Critical Report, p.105) notes that the separate recorder parts for Cantata 18 were begun by Bach, presumably to show the copyist the necessary transposition, and that the copyist, obviously unaware of the recorder's compass, then completed them, slavishly following the first and second viola parts. This information, however, is incomplete and incorrect. Conforming to one of Bach's standard practices in preparing performance parts, his student here copied out the notes and Bach afterwards added various articulation, dynamic, and ornamental markings (see NBA I/vii, Critical Report, p.108). In the second recorder part at bar 42 of the first movement up to its conclusion at the *da capo*, Bach's own handwriting takes over once again (not mentioned by Power; but see NBA I/vii, Critical Report, p.105). Bach wished to change the octave placement of the recorder line from the viola part's n.2 of bar 43 up to n.1 of bar 47; the recorder part would otherwise have descended to a notated *d'*, a note that is physically

impossible to produce on the recorder in  $f'$ . In the soprano aria, there is in bar 7 a notated  $e'$ , a pitch that is difficult but physically possible to produce on the recorder in  $f'$ ; incidentally, here at bar 7, the articulations in the recorder parts are different from those in the doubling viola parts (see NBA I/vii, Critical Report, p.115), perhaps in order to accommodate the specific technical challenges on the recorder. In the first movement, there is in bar 35 a notated  $a'''$ , a pitch that is likewise difficult but physically possible to produce on the recorder in  $f'$ . That this note does not actually fall outside the compass of Bach's recorders is evident from the fact that Bach calls for its fingering in the composing scores and original performing parts of two other cantatas. The Weimar version of Cantata 182 reaches notated and fingered  $a'''$  in bars 40–41 of the first chorus and bars 124 and 134 of the closing chorus (Power has seriously garbled his description of this cantata, as will be explained later on). The first version of *Ihr werdet weinen und heulen*, BWV 103, contains at bars 77–78 of the first movement two notated instances of a recorder player's having to finger on a sixth-flute (recorder in  $d''$ ) the equivalent of the note  $a'''$  on a recorder in F (see Marissen, *JAMIS*, p.15; Power has excluded Cantata 103 from consideration because it is not scored for treble recorder; with its specific technical requirements, this work, however, is relevant to Power's discussion).

Power's first condition for a treble recorder pitched in G is that when a treble recorder in F is clearly required (i.e., when the part descends to  $f'$ ), Bach never requires the instrument to produce the pitch  $f\sharp'''$ . His second condition is that when Bach requires the pitch  $f\sharp'''$  of a treble recorder, the compass of the part does not descend below  $g'$ .

Neither of these holds up to scrutiny. The recorder parts in Cantata 18, even if not part of the cantata's original design, are demonstrably authentic, and they go against both conditions (see in the first part,  $f\sharp'''$  in bars 21, 23, and 27 of the opening movement;  $f'$  in bar 44 of the opening movement and bars 7–10 and 12 of the soprano aria).

At p.158 Power admits that the *fiauto piccolo* part from *Liebster Gott, wenn werd ich Sterben*, BWV 8, is the only Bach *fiauto* line whose original performance part is actually transposed in such a way that it accommodates a recorder in G (for the opening chorus, the part is notated in D major, whereas the other performance parts are written in E major; see also Marissen, *JAMIS*, p.37, fn.86). Power fails to mention, however, that when performed on a recorder pitched in G, the player will be required to finger the equivalent of the dreaded  $f\sharp'''$  – see bars 46–47 in NBA I/23, music volume, p.130, where the sounding pitches in the *fiauto piccolo* version reach  $g\sharp'''$  (i.e., notated  $f\sharp'''$  in the original performing part), a note that on a recorder pitched in G would have to be fingered the way an  $f\sharp'''$  is on an instrument in F.

Certain problems continually come up in the literature on Bach's recorder parts. Crucial matters to consider in any study of Bach's recorder

music include the following: is the work really by Bach; is the early musical source invoked Bach's own or demonstrably based on Bach's; which version of the work in question does the recorder part belong to; is the recorder line notated in the same key as most of the other parts in the work; what clef is used; to what fingering is the part oriented; and, what is the pitch standard of the overall ensemble. Almost all of the (remarkably extensive) writings on Bach's recorder parts, alas, get more than one of these parameters wrong.

Power's discussion is confused on several of the issues just mentioned, and consequently each of his conclusions for the Fourth Brandenburg Concerto and for Cantatas 161a and 182 turns out to be insupportable.

For Cantata 161a, it follows from Power's suggestions (p.158) that the first recorder player, reading from a part notated in French violin clef (with  $g'$  on the bottom line), would take up a recorder in G and transpose the part by reading it in alto clef and making the necessary adjustments (i.e., those concerning accidentals and overall octave placement). Although Power provides the correct ranges for the recorder lines, he fails to mention that while most of the cantata's score is notated in C major, the recorder lines are notated in E-flat major. The reason for this, as explained in Marissen, *JAMIS*, p.12, is that the Weimar church musicians tuned to *Chorton*. To match C-major in *Chorton*, Bach's recorder parts were notated a minor third higher, in E-flat, for performance on F recorders tuned in *Tief-Kammerton* (i.e., confronted with a notated  $e\flat''$  the recorder player fingered it  $O/13/4$ , and this came out in unison with any notated  $c''$  from the other performance parts). In other words, for performance on a G recorder the first player would have to finger the instrument as if playing in D-flat major [*sic*] on an F recorder. Power (p.158) also points out that trills on  $f\sharp'''$  are rather impractical for recorders in F. He fails to mention, however, that there are no notated trills on this note in any of Bach's recorder parts; the only example in which there is even an implied trill on  $f\sharp'''$  occurs in Cantata 161a (at bar 69 of the first chorus; see NBA I/23, music volume, p.27), and it has already been explained why this part is rather unlikely to have been meant for a recorder pitched in G.

The same sorts of criticisms damage Power's conclusions regarding Cantata 182. But first some attention must be brought to larger, more general problems. Power does not distinguish between the Leipzig and Weimar versions of this cantata. Furthermore, none of the original sources for Cantata 182 has the range that Power ascribes to the recorder part ( $g'-g'''$ ). For the necessary details on the various versions, see Marissen, *JAMIS*, pp.12, 15-7, 19-20, 34-5.

In Bach's composing score and the performing part copied from it for performance in Weimar, the notated range of the recorder line is  $g'-a'''$ . Power fails to mention that while the cantata is notated in G major, the recorder line in both sources is notated in B-flat major. To match G

major in *Chorton*, Bach's recorder line was notated a minor third higher, in B-flat, for performance on an F recorder tuned in *Tief-Kammerton* (e.g., confronted with a notated  $b\flat'$ , the recorder player fingered it 0/123/46, and this came out in unison with any notated  $g'$  from the other performance parts). In other words, for performance on a G recorder the player would have to finger the instrument as if playing in A-flat major on an F recorder. A much more serious difficulty for Power's argument, however, is that if this version were performed on a recorder pitched in G, the player would still be required to finger the equivalent of  $f\sharp'''$  (see bars 5 and 11 of the *Sonate*, and bars 3 and 26 of the alto aria, where the sounding pitches in the Weimar version reach  $a\flat'''$ , a note that on a recorder pitched in G would have to be fingered the way an  $f\sharp'''$  is on an instrument in F; since the Weimar version also contains notated  $f\sharp'''$  or  $g\flat'''$  (see bars 12–13 of the *Sonate*, and bars 4 and 26 of the alto aria), it turns out that fingering the  $f\sharp'''$  will be required whether one picks up recorders pitched in F or G.

Taking his Weimar score of Cantata 182, Bach during his tenure at Leipzig entered a number of revisions so that the recorder part could there be played a third lower, in G at regular *Kammerton* (thereby matching the G-major *Kammerton* of his Leipzig ensemble; see Marissen, *JAMIS*, pp.34–5). An entirely new performance part was copied from Bach's revised score, now in G major rather than B-flat, and in treble clef rather than French violin clef (i.e., confronted with a notated  $g'$ , a recorder player would finger it 0/123/456, and this would come out in unison with any notated  $g'$  from the other surviving performance parts). For a number of instances the student copyist of the separate performance part for Leipzig overlooked Bach's revisions (e.g., in bars 40–41 of the first chorus, bar 10 of the alto aria, and bar 134 of the final chorus), and thus the ranges in the two Leipzig sources are not identical. The notated range in Bach's score, after the revisions, is  $g'-f'''$ . Among other technical difficulties (discussed in Marissen, *JAMIS*), Bach consistently alters the counterpoint to avoid  $f\sharp'''$  (i.e., wherever there was an  $a'''$  in the Weimar version) – see bars 40–41 of the first chorus and bars 124–26 and 134 of the closing chorus. (Because the copyist missed several of Bach's revisions, it turns out that the notated range for the Leipzig performance part is  $f\sharp'-f\sharp'''$ .) Bach assuredly would not have bothered to make many of his various revisions if he really had in mind a recorder pitched in G: there is no need to mar the counterpoint by avoiding notated  $f\sharp'''$  if it can be easily fingered on a G recorder as if one were playing an  $e'''$  on an F recorder.

What, then, about the first recorder line in the Fourth Brandenburg Concerto? In this line, like in the Leipzig sources for Cantata 182,  $f\sharp'''$  is carefully avoided: compare the first recorder lines in the opening movements of Bach's F-major concerto, BWV 1057, and the Fourth Brandenburg Concerto at bars 304–307, especially the first note of

bar 306 (as illustrated in Example 1 on p. 18 of Marissen, *JAMIS*; Bach does allow the  $f\sharp'''$  at other spots in the first recorder part, but only where it is possible to pull it off convincingly). As explained earlier (and more fully in Marissen, *JAMIS*), it does not make any sense to avoid this notated pitch if it is to be performed on a recorder in G. Curiously, Power (p.160, n.10) says that he finds compelling my several examples in *JAMIS*, pp.19–22, of Bach's wittingly avoiding  $f\sharp'''$  at the expense of his counterpoint and linear integrity. That discussion, however, centres not on the avoidance of  $f\sharp'''$  but of  $f\sharp'$  (in Cantata 13, the Leipzig version of 182, and the F-major concerto, BWV 1057). My discussion of Bach's conspicuously avoiding  $f\sharp'''$  in certain contexts appears at pp.17–19; the works in question there are the Leipzig version of Cantata 182 and *both* recorder lines in the Fourth Brandenburg Concerto – i.e., two of the pieces Power argues were designed for recorders pitched in G and thus should not have required the avoidance of notated  $f\sharp'''$ .

Evidence for Bach's thinking in terms of a recorder in F is thus especially strong in the cases of the Leipzig version of Cantata 182 and both recorder lines in the Fourth Brandenburg Concerto (because each of these parts obviously avoids  $f\sharp'''$  at least once, with resulting inferior counterpoint). Other reasons, already given, indicate that the parts in Cantata 161a and the Weimar version of 182 make the most sense on recorders in F. It is difficult to say one way or the other what the answer is for Power's one remaining example, Cantata 25 (whose range for recorder III, though perhaps only through typographical error, is also incorrectly listed; it goes up to  $d'''$ ). Bach, as we have seen, must have required the fingered  $f\sharp'''$  from his players in several other works. There is no compelling reason why he could not have done so also for Cantata 25. No great significance, incidentally, need be attached to the fact that the four pieces Power discusses feature a recorder part that does not descend below the notated  $g'$ . Bach's Cantatas 46, 69a, 81, 103, 122, 127, 175, 208, 249(a), and the first version of the *Magnificat* (BWV 243a) also have at least one recorder part that does this.

The various recurring phenomena to which Power calls our attention, it seems, are either not actually to be found consistently in the Bach recorder parts or, upon consideration of important overlooked factors, cannot have the meanings he has suggested. Having examined each of the original scores and performance parts in Berlin and Leipzig, I plan to write up a study of all the Bach recorder parts (my *JAMIS* essay discussed only those parts that were relevant to the Fourth Brandenburg Concerto), with the hope that such a study would contribute to a greater understanding of Bach's music for the instrument.

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