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EMBODYING THE MUSIC AND DEATH NEXUS

Consolations, Salvations and Transformations

EDITED BY

Marie Josephine Bennett
Jasmine Hazel Shadrack and Gary Levy

Embodying the Music and Death Nexus

Emerald Interdisciplinary Connexions

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Embodying the Music and Death Nexus: Consolations, Salvations and Transformations

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About the Contributors

Marie Josephine Bennett completed her PhD at the University of Winchester, where her research focused on critical readings of queer performance in a number of mainstream post-Production Code Hollywood film musicals released between 1970 and 1980. Her other major areas of interest are music in films, queer studies, celebrity studies, popular music of the 1960s–1980s and the Eurovision Song Contest. Marie is an active music teacher, musician and researcher.

Janieke Bruin-Mollenhorst conducted her PhD research on music during contemporary funerals in the Netherlands at the Department of Culture Studies of Tilburg University (the Netherlands). In addition to her dissertation, she has published various articles and book chapters on music and death. She is the initiator of the DONE network, a Dutch network of scholars who study death-related topics, and the FUNERALLAB, which aims to bring together both various funerary professionals and death scholars. After finishing her dissertation, she continued her career as a teacher and researcher at the University of Groningen. Currently, she is the academic coordinator of the Institute for Ritual and Liturgical Studies, located at the Protestant Theological University in Amsterdam.

Amanda DiGioia's PhD thesis asks, 'How are women, and to some extent other genders, conceptualised and represented in Finnish heavy metal music lyrics?' Her research interests outside of her PhD thesis include feminist approaches to narratives in texts. Her publications discuss a variety of topics, ranging from toxic masculinity in duelling (as explored in her monograph *Duelling, the Russian Cultural Imagination, and Masculinity in Crisis*, 2020), to childbirth and parenting in horror texts (as explored in *Childbirth and Parenting in Horror Texts: The Marginalized and the Monstrous*, 2017 and *Gender and Parenting in the Worlds of Alien and Blade Runner: A Feminist Analysis*, 2021). Her future work will touch on gender in Peter Benchley's novels *Jaws* and *White Shark*.

Jenny Game is an educator, scholar, composer and performer (saxophones). Her doctorate focused on intercultural music and the composition of a chamber opera *The Aqueduct*. Her research interests also include music education, ethnomusicology and the performing arts. Jenny has been composing and performing professionally for over 30 years and has released a number of CDs/DVDs as performer/composer. In March 2021, Jenny performed the compositions discussed in this chapter, *Marianne*, *So True* and *Onedelast*, with her new music

ensemble Aurora Lumina (vibraphone, tenor and soprano saxes, five string double bass, marimbas, kit and hand percussion). The performance was live streamed as part of the multimedia production *Windows of Longing* that celebrated the life and art of Australian painter Edward Heffernan OAM (1912–92).

Marek Jeziński is Professor of Media, Communication and Journalism at Nicolaus Copernicus University, Poland. He is an author of over 150 academic papers on media and communication, journalism, popular music, political science, political language, sociology, popular culture, contemporary theatre and performance. He published the books: *The Quest for Political Myth and Symbol in the Political Language of Akcja Wyborcza "Solidarność" and Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej* (2003); *Marketing polityczny a procesy akulturacyjne. Przypadek III RP* (2004), *Język przemówień politycznych Wojciecha Jaruzelskiego w okresie stanu wojennego* (2009), *Muzyka popularna jako wehikuł ideologiczny* (2011), *Mitologie muzyki popularnej* (2014), and *Muzyka popularna i jej odbiorcy w poszukiwaniu autorytetu* (2017). He published articles in *Medien und Zeit*, *M/C Journal*, *Rock Music Studies*, *Riffs*, *AVANT*, *Kultura Popularna*, *Studia Politologiczne*, *Athenaeum* and *Kultura Współczesna*. Also he is an editor of several academic books on popular culture, art, media and communication, journalism, cultural anthropology and political sciences.

Rebecca Jiggens is a recovering ordinary language philosopher turned critical disability lawyer specialising in employment discrimination. Her academic research follows a central theme of what constitutes effective communication and understanding of deep subjective meaning across critical epistemic and cultural divides – for example, class, disability, gender/ID, ethnicity and faith. When not trying to address disability epistemic injustice in the Employment Tribunal, she can probably be found ranting on Twitter. ND. CI. VI.

Alison Duncan Kerr is a feminist philosopher. She was the Founding Director of the St Andrews Institute for Gender Studies, from where she moved to be Founding Co-Director of the Centre for Research Activism for Intersectional Justice. Her research focuses on philosophy of mind, emotions, gender and their application in practice.

Benjamin Lassauzet is Professeur agrégé at the Clermont-Auvergne University (France) and member of CREAA (Centre de Recherche Expérimentale sur l'Acte Artistique) and CHEC (Centre d'Histoire Espaces et Cultures). He completed a PhD in 2017 about Debussy and humour, from which he wrote a book entitled *L'Humour de Claude Debussy* (Hermann, 2019), which won an award in 2020 ('Coup de Coeur' Prix France Musique Claude Samuel). He has also worked on the notion of ecstasy in Scriabin, the symbolic role of music in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, the sources of influence of Radiohead's *OK Computer*, and Icelandic music and identity in a globalisation context.

Gary Levy did his foundational studies in the Alexander Technique and has been a qualified and practicing teacher of the Technique since 1992. He has also worked as an educational researcher, university lecturer and tutor since 2012,

teaching in the areas of curriculum, pedagogy, health and well-being, philosophy of education, and educational research methodologies, also supervising post-graduate students. He has published in the areas on sociology of education, post-qualitative research, music, death, affect- and auto-theory. Gary is an amateur musician (at the piano, in a chorus, with an audience) and concurs with Nietzsche's dictum that, 'without music, life would be a mistake'.

Matthew McCullough is the current Van Mildert College Trust PhD Scholar at Durham University where he is affiliated with the Department of Music and *The Centre for Death and Life Studies*. He holds an Associate Fellowship at Van Mildert College and a DCAD Fellowship at Durham University (2021–23). Matthew's research specialism lies in British and Irish music and culture of the 19th and 20th centuries, and more broadly at the intersection of musicology and death studies; he is particularly interested in music's relationship with death, grief, trauma and memory. Matthew's current PhD thesis (historical musicology and analysis) merges these interests in a study of British composers' responses to World War I and the ways in which their work helped shape a collective and cultural memory of the war.

Nachthexe is a psychoanalyst and auto-ethnographer who specialises in trauma and herstory, performance studies, disability studies and metal music studies. She is a member of the National Coalition for Independent Scholars and the Forum for Independent Research Endeavours. She sits on the editorial board for the International Society for Metal Music Studies and the new series *Advances in Metal Music and Culture* through Intellect Books. Her monograph *Black Metal, Trauma, Subjectivity, and Sound: Screaming the Abyss* is out now through Emerald Publishing Limited.

Niall Scott is Reader in Philosophy and Popular Culture at the University of Central Lancashire. He is the principal editor of the Intellect journal *Metal Music Studies* and was a founding member and chair of the International Society for Metal Music Studies (ISMMS). He has published widely on heavy metal music and its culture from a philosophical and theological perspective, including in edited collections such as *Reflections in the Metal Void* (2011), *Heavy Metal and Gender* with Florian Heesch (2016) and *Heavy Metal Music and the Communal Experience* with Nelson Varas-Diaz (2016).

Francesca Stevens is an operatic soprano, metal musician and academic. She has a diverse range of interests that span across the history of music from classical to modern metal. Her academic research focuses on extreme metal music, feminist psychoanalysis, ethnography and musicology. Francesca is a Lecturer in music at Falmouth University (UK) where she teaches across all three music courses. As a songwriter and performer, she has toured the UK and Europe with black metal collective Denigrata and released the debut album *Missa Defunctorum: Requiem Mass in A Minor*. She is also currently working on a feminist blackened folk duo with Nachthexe entitled Dōloûr.

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Prologue

The German Catholic philosopher Joseph Pieper wrote that 'music may be nothing but a secret philosophizing of the soul, an *Exercitium Metaphysice Occultum*' (1990, p. 39). He went on to suggest that 'music prompts the philosopher's continued interest because it is by nature so *close to the fundamentals of human existence*' (p. 39, italics in original). In this volume, *Embodying the Music and Death Nexus: Consolations, Salvations and Transformations*, we suggest that the inevitability of death, foreseen or otherwise, is another such fundamental. The fact that we (humans) each assume and inhabit a unique corporeal form is a third such fundamental. Thus, the intersections and entanglements between music, death and the body provide fertile ground for original exploration.

This collection has some of its antecedents in a conference held in Vienna in December 2017 that explored the relationship between music and death from a variety of perspectives and vantage points. A number of the papers from that conference were curated and published by Emerald in 2020.[1] The three co-editors of this volume attended and presented at the Vienna conference, and each contributed chapters to the follow-up publication. Marie Josephine Bennett was also one of the two co-editors of the previous volume. The music and death nexus continued to grip the three of us, and we shared an instinctive belief that there were other rich veins to tap into. The metaphorical vein we hit on turned out to be one in which the human body itself was the site through which music and death converged, organised and intensified. Once this became clear to us, we were ready to solicit contributions from scholars working in a variety of disciplines and genres, as well as to begin some fresh work of our own.

Oliver Sacks, the English neurologist of the soul, wrote that:

> Music can pierce the heart directly, it needs no mediation. One does not have to know anything about Dido and Aeneas to be moved by her lament for him; anyone who has ever lost someone knows what Dido is expressing. And there is, finally, a deep and mysterious paradox here, for while such music makes one experience pain and grief more intensely, it brings solace and consolation at the same time.
>
> (2007, p. 301)

[1]Bennett and Gracon (2020).

While solace, consolation, pain, grief and mystery are all alluded to in the chapters that follow, Sacks's image is also noteworthy for the way it acknowledges the physical, even physiological power and potency of music. A heart literally pierced would more than likely lead to the death of the heart's owner, yet here, Sacks is suggesting that the power of music can, paradoxically, be lethally restorative. Via the same, aforementioned essay by Sacks, Maria Popova is also led to an autobiographical text by Wendy Lesser (2007). Lesser describes how listening to a concert in Berlin helped her to come to terms with the loss of a loved one. As an atheist, it was important that she did not know the words (to the Brahms' composition *A German Requiem*) that were being sung by the chorus, but rather:

> I just allowed them to echo through my body: I *felt* them, quite literally, instead of understanding them. And the reverie I fell into as I listened to Brahms's music was not about God triumphing over death, but about music and death grappling with each other.
> (cited in Popova, 2016, np)

Like Sacks's 'piercing', Lesser's notion of 'grappling' points to the physical bridging of death and music, a wrestling that has both corporeal and affective dimensions. The nineteenth-century German philosopher Artur Schopenhauer suggested that music 'does not speak of things but tells of weal and woe' (1851/1974, p. 430). A weal is a visible swelling or bruising of the flesh created by the impact of an actual blow or pressure, a physical marking and signifying of pain or sorrow. For Schopenhauer, music had a unique capacity to speak this marking and signification. Embodied encounters with death often have a musical accompaniment. Sometimes, that musical accompaniment can serve as a necessary (and unexpected) container for powerfully-felt reactions that might otherwise prove to be overwhelming, if not unbearable, for the death-affected person, family and/or community. At other times, the musical accompaniment can provide means and modes for the near-death, grief, loss, fear or desire to be processed, understood, accepted, integrated, rejected or harnessed as a catalyst.

The interdisciplinary nature of this volume intentionally avoids location in any singular field of study, offering material for researchers and practitioners in areas including death studies, classical music, popular music sub-genres, psychology, psychoanalysis, auto/ethnography, trauma studies, cultural history, disability studies, film studies, funeral studies, musicology, subculture studies and queer studies. The four sections and their respective headings highlight the breadth of approaches adopted by the authors. Thus, in Section One, 'Death and the Canon', the music of Bach, Mozart and Mahler, respectively, provides the primary source and impetus for exploration and analysis. In Section Two, 'Chthonics', it is various forms and sub-genres of black metal music that act as lynchpins for very broad and deeply personal encounters. In Section Three, 'Death and Resurrection', the personal and aesthetic intersect with queer and disability pre-occupations and perspectives. In the final section, 'Life Beyond Death', each of the three chapters focus on particular historical moments of death as axes

around which complex, prolific and poignant musical responses were engendered. Together, the 12 chapters highlight the different ways in which the embodiment of death through music has been encountered and expounded. They thus have the potential to move readers towards a deeper exploration and fuller understanding of their own and others' entangled embodiment of music-inflected encounters with death.

The chapters within traverse a variety of ways in which the nexus of music and death is mediated through bodily experiences and responses. These bodily experiences can be physical and/or emotional, with resonances and ramifications also felt spiritually and/or politically. The various authors invite us to consider, if not also to co-inhabit, the faithful body (Levy; Bruin-Mollenhorst); the cinematic body (Bennett); the grieving body (Lassauzet); the composing body (Game; Nachthexe; McCullough); the suffering body (DiGioia; Nachthexe); the collective body or body politic (Jeziński); the crip body (Duncan Kerr and Jiggens); the resurrected body (Lassauzet; Bruin-Mollenhorst); the lost body (McCullough); the abject body (Duncan Kerr and Jiggens; Stevens); the vulnerable body (DiGioia) and the apophatic body (Scott). In each of these chapters, different bodies act as sites through which death resonates and reverberates in a wide variety of music genres and modes of expression.

Coupled with this Prologue, we have provided short introductions to each of the four sections, as well as an Epilogue with some final reflections following the last chapter. When first embarking on this project, we were surprised at how little other work we were able to find (in English) that coupled the music and death nexus with an interest in corporeal, embodied or affective dimensions. Even the poets, often the finest musicians of life's fundamentals, appear to have remained largely silent on the subject. All the more reason, then, that this collection offers itself up for perusal, extended listening and deeper contemplation.

Marie Josephine Bennett, Jasmine Hazel Shadrack and Gary Levy,
February 2022.

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Section 1
Death and the Canon: Classical Entanglements of Death, Grief and Perspective

The essays in the first section of the collection focus on composers whose pieces fall under the umbrella of 'classical' music, namely Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) and Gustav Mahler (1860–1911). Death was a constant companion during their compositional lifetimes. For example, all three composers had children who died in infancy and/or early childhood. In the first chapter, 'Permeating the membrane: Death as life-fulfilment through the prism of Bach's *Ich habe genug* (BWV 82)', Gary Levy examines the peaceful acceptance of death offered via the composer's setting of the anonymous text to music. He also deliberates on the reasons for the continuing popularity of this oft-recorded cantata. In the second chapter, 'Mozart's Music in Film: Death and Embodied Affect', Marie Josephine Bennett considers how specific works by Mozart are employed in three different movies to highlight the music and death nexus present in each filmic narrative. As she argues, in each of the films analysed, a piece of music by the composer is connected to death and embodied affect. In the final chapter of this section, 'Mahler's Second Symphony: Intuitively Embodying Grief and Dying', Benjamin Lassauzet proposes that Mahler instinctively demonstrated the 5-stage model of approaching death illustrated by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in 1969 within his *Symphony No. 2*, first performed in 1895. As Lassauzet suggests, in some ways, one could claim that the grief model was conceived via Mahler's composition, rather than through the text of Kübler-Ross.

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Chapter 1

Permeating the Membrane: Death as Life-Fulfilment Through the Prism of Bach's *Ich habe genug* (BWV 82)

Gary Levy

Abstract

Ich habe genug (*I have enough*) BWV 82 is one of the best known, most regularly performed and consistently recorded of J.S. Bach's approximately 200 extant sacred cantatas.[1] In the text, by an anonymous author, the narrator repeatedly expresses their readiness to die, in faith that they will be received by their saviour in eternal life. The whole cantata expresses a fearless 'longing for death' (Schweitzer, 1911/1966, p. 114), coupled with a serene contentment. Bach's setting of this text for religious purposes not only supports the sentiments expressed by the narrator but colours, illuminates, vitalises and elevates it in ways that startle the ear, quicken the spirit and stir the imagination. In the third and final aria of the cantata, Bach employs an almost-jaunty dance rhythm to accompany the narrator's anticipatory delight in their own death, liberated from worldly and bodily suffering. After identifying some of the ingenious ways Bach animates the text, I offer some speculations and elaborations as to how and why this work has had such an enduring presence in the Western musical canon, for believers and non-believers alike.

Keywords: Bach cantatas; body-soul; vocal timbre; heart; music; death

Bach and His Sacred Cantatas

The Lutheran Protestant tradition was nearly 200 years old when Bach was born in 1685. Bach's sacred cantatas are musical settings composed either on actual

[1]BWV is the acronym of the German *Bach-Werke-Verzeichnis*, a catalogue of compositions by Johann Sebastian Bach first published in 1950 and updated in 1998.

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biblical texts or texts written as responses to biblical or religious stories and themes. These cantatas have been variously termed 'sermons in verse and music' (Steinberg, 2003, np) and 'operas of the soul' (Ringer, 2020, p. 4). Bach's musical treatment of the relationship between embodied existence, religious faith, a longing for death and a joyful anticipation of the eternal life to come features in many of his sacred cantatas (Bossuyt, 2015; Dürr, 1992/2005; Ringer, 2020). For one contemporary scholar who is also a performing musician, a theologian and an ordained priest, the biblical Word (text) is sacred (Begbie, 2021). The music can, at best, be 'an acute witness to the impossibility (and danger) of imagining we can grasp or circumscribe the divine' (p. 360). Moreover, for Jeremy Begbie, the music can – for the Christian believer – 'free us for an engagement with language that allows it to become a vehicle for communion rather than a tool of seizure or control' (p. 369). For the Christian of faith, alongside God's 'uncontainable abundance' (p. 373), the right combination of words and music can generate a momentum of 'gratuitous extravagance' (p. 372). Bach's sacred cantatas fit this description very well, even if not the intended subject of Begbie's discussion.

Wilfrid Mellers (1980) is another helpful guide, suggesting that while 'no-one with ears to hear can doubt that Bach was at heart a religious composer', yet 'his religion springs from the depths of the human psyche, rather than from a topical or local creed' (p. 73). Despite the clear and substantial rootedness of BWV 82 in Christian theology and liturgy, Bach's musical rendering of the text has attracted listeners for nearly 300 years, whether in churches, concert halls or through the many recordings that have become available. It is this abiding interest that I seek to explore in this chapter.

Mellers (1980) also suggested that 'Bach's art is beyond his superlative craft' (p. 312). Perhaps, therefore, there is no single point of entry for exploring Bach's BWV 82, even if there are markers locating the work in various historical, socio-cultural, aesthetic and discursive contexts. Bettina Varwig, the eminent Bach and early modern music scholar, suggests that each of Bach's sacred cantatas can be considered a work of art (2020a, p. 210). Varwig has also written specifically, richly, and generatively on BWV 82 (2010), as well as other Bach cantatas, and the related historical period (2012, 2014, 2018, 2019, 2020a, 2020b). Her overall approach is less interested in structural-hermeneutic, or narrowly theological-doctrinal readings, and more committed to combining research-informed historical re-imaginings with current-contemporary sensibilities in what she refers to as exercises in 'retro-projection' (Varwig, 2018, p. 38). I will return later to some of these retro-projections. I will also share some insights from other scholars and performers in an attempt to glean some fresh thoughts about the embodied music and death nexus through the prism of Bach's BWV 82. For the readers not so familiar with BWV 82, I will first offer some description and discussion of the text and music.

Opening Aria – Exclamation, Anticipation (*Ich habe genug*)

The cantata was originally written for the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin Mary and sung for the first time (in Leipzig) on that feast day, 2 February 1727

(Steinberg, 2003, np). One can assume, with good reason, that the first-person [*Ich*/*I*] narrator is the ageing historical figure Simeon who, in Luke's Gospel (2:25-35) has been 'promised' a meeting (by the Holy Ghost) with God's Messiah (Christ) before his (Simeon's) own death. In Luke's Gospel, Simeon has entered the temple in Jerusalem and is waiting for Mary and Joseph to bring their baby boy to be blessed. Mary is also due to be ritually purified following the 40 days since giving birth, although this feature does not appear in the text of the cantata. In the temple, Simeon takes the infant in his arms and, so moved by meeting his promised saviour, announces to God that he is hence ready [*noch heute mit Freuden*/*even today with joy*], even wishing [*Nun wünsch ich*] to accept his death, and to depart from the world [*Von hinnen zu scheiden*]. Simeon is in no doubt that he has met God's incarnation in the infant, who would thence bring light to the people of Israel and salvation for the Gentiles. Simeon's story points to Bach's reason for originally setting the text (in C minor) for a male bass/baritone voice. It should also be noted that, while Simeon does appear (for the one and only time) in Luke, the text Bach set was/is by an unknown librettist and thus, is not the New Testament text of Luke.

Meeting the infant saviour and holding him in his arms leads Simeon to make his opening declaration, and then exclamation, in the text: *Ich habe genug* [*I have enough*]. The somewhat plaintive and yearning tone of the opening (and original) solo oboe line is then followed by similar, entwining melodic contours from the singer, yet we probably need to read Simeon's (opening and repeated) declaration more as a statement of blessed relief and contentment, than of wretched resignation, or as a plea for comfort and consolation. Holding and 'beholding' [*erblickt*] the infant Jesus is, for Simeon, all he needs to confirm his faith in God, and God's promise of the eternal blessing to follow his death. Perhaps Bach's choice of a 3/8 time signature was also intended to reflect the gentle, rocking rhythm that Simeon may have instinctively generated as he held the infant in his arms.

Some versions of the overall title and text (Bach, 1994; Harnoncourt, 1994; Netherlands Bach Society, 2014) prefer *Ich habe genung* over *Ich habe genug*. Whilst the German word *genung* does not appear in modern usage or translation, it might connote 'contentment', or perhaps fulfilment, rather than just adequacy [*enough*]. This would be in keeping with Simeon's *faith* [*Glaube*] which has been fully vindicated by having the infant Jesus not only in his arms but 'pressed… to my heart' [*ans Herz gedrückt*]. The physical, embodied nature of Simeon's faith is clearly captured here, while the extended and highly decorative embellishment (by Bach) of Simeon's *joy* [*Freuden*] is palpable.

Recitative 1 (…*Mein Trost ist nur allein*)

In the first of the two recitatives, each of which form a narrative bridge between two arias, the text begins with a rearticulation of the prevailing sentiment, *Ich habe genug* [*I have enough*/*I am content*] followed by a reaffirmation that the speaker's *Trost* [*comfort, consolation*] comes from knowing that he and Jesus now

have each other forever [*mein und ich sein eigen möchte sein*]. The declaration of *faith* [*Glaube*] is also reaffirmed, as is the anticipated *joy* [*Freude*] of being joined with his saviour in the *other life* [*jenes Leben*]. Here again, the joy [*Freude*] is the most embellished word/feeling in the section, highlighting the ecstatic allure of moving from mortal to eternal life. There is a twist in the text however, in that the narrator projects their anticipated joy alongside Simeon [*auch mit Simeon*], thereby suggesting themselves as someone other than Simeon, and inviting others to join Simeon on his journey of faith and union with Christ [*Laßt uns mit diesem Manne ziehen!*/*Let us go with this man!*]. Perhaps the figure other than Simeon is intended by the unknown author to be any member of the congregation who happened to attend the service, or even any other/every devout and faithful Christian. This ambiguity in the text also opens it up to be sung by other voice types and thus to be inclusive of other/all kinds of different (faithful, believing) people, both in the Leipzig of Bach's time and beyond.

In the second stanza of the recitative, Simeon/the narrator/every-faithful-Christian pleads for God's assistance to be liberated from a *body still enslaved to life* [*meines Leibes Ketten*] yet *yearning to depart, presently* [*mein Abschied hier*]. The yearning is emphasised by repeated exclamations *Ach!* [*Ah!*], and a further restatement of the central trope, *Ich habe genug* [*I have enough*/*I am content*]. In case we are still in any doubt, the anticipated *joy* [*Freuden*] of leaving the *world* [*Welt*] contently is again illustrated with an exuberant musical flourish.

Middle Aria – Resignation, Affirmation (*Schlummert ein*…)

The central aria is the gently beating heart of the cantata, anchored in the perfectly steady pulse provided by the (organ and bass) continuo in common (4/4) time. This aria has attracted enduring attention for its musical interest and qualities (e.g. Gardiner, 2013; Ringer, 2020; Steinberg, 2003) but needs to be discussed in context here. The aria is generally recognised to be a 'death lullaby' (Yearsley, 2019, p. 101) wherein one's *weary eyes* [*matten Augen*] are being invited to *fall gently* [*fallet sanft*] and to *slumber* [*schlummert ein*] *blissfully* [*selig zu*]. Initially, we might imagine an infant falling asleep in the arms of a parent, or perhaps the baby Jesus again, in the arms of Simeon. When considered closely, it is more likely that we are back with old Simeon himself, and Varwig (2010) suggests that Simeon might even be performing the 'peculiar feat' (p. 326) of singing the lullaby to himself. If not this strange scenario, then perhaps the singer is emblematic of the everyday person of faith who is world-weary and ready to leave their material, earthly existence for the rewards that lie beyond.

In the first section (27 bars) Bach offers a melody of surpassing beauty embedded in a musical cushion of the utmost tenderness. In the second section, however, the text and the music take on a much sharper and even defiant edge. The speaker addresses the material world [*Welt!*] directly, declaring an urgent need to separate and depart, given the utter insignificance of the material world for their soul [*Hab ich doch kein Teil an dir, Das der Seele könnte taugen*]. For the speaker, any further time on earth will only increase their misery [*Hier muß ich*

das Elend bauen]. By contrast, the speaker anticipates a place beyond, a *there* [*dort*], where they will encounter sweet peace and quiet rest [*Süßen Friede, stille Ruhe*]. It is important to note that this elsewhere is projected as having its own reality, with qualities to support and nurture the soul, as distinct from being void or empty. It is this longed-for place of peace and sweetness that also leads to the recapitulation of the first section of the aria, the same 27 bars, to reinforce the weariness, resignation and readiness for a human death, followed by eternal sleep in a heavenly destination.

Recitative 2 (*Mein Gott!)*

In the second of the two bridging recitatives, the narrator turns supplicant, directly addressing their personal God [*Mein Gott!*], asking when the beautiful moment of death, the lovely 'now' [*das schöne: Nun!*], will arrive. The hope is for a swift passage *into the cool soil of the earth* [*in dem Sande kühler Erde*] through which the devout worshipper expects to find themself resting in the lap of their saviour [*im Schoße ruhn*]. The farewells to the world have been completed [*Der Abschied ist gemacht*]. Far from there being any fear or apprehension, the readiness is all for the peaceful journey [*im Friede fahren*]. The sentiments underpinning and directing this 'movement' of the drama are fundamental to Christian (specifically Lutheran) theology.

Final Aria – Celebration, Salvation (*Ich freue mich*…)

The text of the final aria presents the narrator/Simeon/devout worshipper/person of Christian faith/'unspecified' individual (Varwig, 2010, p. 353) still teetering on the edge of life, longing to be liberated from their suffering and bodily enslavement to the mortal world [*da entkomm ich aller Not, die mich noch auf der Welt gebunden*]. The opening line of the text also provides the spark and impulse for Bach's daring, almost-jaunty dance rhythm, this time in a very different 3/8 from the opening aria, and back in the minor key to (perhaps) signify the underlying gravity. The soloist/soul-voyager exults unequivocally in their (anticipated) death [*Ich freue mich auf meinem Tod*], even though that death still remains, cursedly, presently unrealised, or unfulfilled [*Ach, hätt' er sich schon eingefunden*]. Despite this apparent tension or ambiguity between the not-yet-dead and the glory approaching, the music is in no doubt about the eventual outcome of the struggle for the person of faith, even finishing in the major key to reflect that ultimate confidence. The incessant exuberance of this final movement is intoxicating and, once again, Bach colours the sheer *delight* [*freue*] with long and elaborate embellishment.

Cut Through Time

The above outline might serve as a reminder of the substance of BWV 82 for readers already familiar with the work. If the music/text is not familiar however,

the discussion both above and below will likely make more sense alongside some dedicated listening. Bach was not averse to reusing and/or reworking some of his own material for different occasions and needs. In the case of BWV 82, over a period of about 20 years from 1727, he arranged the same text and music for different voice types: bass, alto, mezzo-soprano, soprano and a second time for bass (Dürr, 1992/2005; Steinberg, 2003). As already noted, the original setting was for a male, most likely intended to suit the character Simeon. That Bach wrote versions for other voice types does suggest his interest in encapsulating and communicating the importance of the sentiments embedded in the text, especially for Christian worshippers.

The bass version was originally with an oboe obbligato, then later an oboe da caccia; the alto and mezzo-soprano were also with oboe obbligato and the soprano was with a flute obbligato.[2] The reasons for these variations are less important in the context of this chapter than the opportunities audiences and readers have to hear the music when scheduled in either a church or concert setting, or by accessing some of the many different recordings (amateur and professional) readily available. Listening to a variety of recordings both across different and within the same voice types can be an often enjoyable and potentially instructive experience. Ultimately, perhaps, the differences and preferences between the many recordings/performances depend on the individual tastes of the worshipper/listener/music lover. Amongst the recordings on offer, many create an urge for repeated listening. This might be due to the tempo (speed) selected by the music director, the types of instruments used (modern orchestral or original/period), the voice type, the quality of the singing/singer, or something less tangible but nevertheless compelling in the performance (such as the setting, filming or sound quality), if not simply the intrinsic wonders of the music itself. Any of these or other reasons provide ground for closer and repeated listening of BWV 82, while also acknowledging that 'music manages in spite of everything to preserve its reticence, mystery, or allusive silence, which in turn symbolizes its autonomy as an art' (Said, 1992, p. 16).[3]

Bach on His Deathbed

As seemingly fulfilled, content and ready as Simeon is to leave the world behind him for the eternal wonders to come, Bach never took such a reward as a foregone

[2]A musical line written for an instrument (e.g. violin, oboe) or voice part that is essential to the overall composition.

[3]Listeners familiar with BWV 82 would probably place older recordings by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Philippe Huttenlocher and Dame Janet Baker high on their list of preferences. More recent recordings by Klaus Mertens, Peter Kooij, Peter Harvey and Thomas Bauer are also likely to feature, as might Ian Bostridge's less-common tenor excursion. Some male altos have also offered compelling performances, especially Andreas Scholl. Carolyn Sampson (soprano), Magdalena Kozena (mezzo-soprano) and Nuria Rial (soprano) are each also worthy of attention. The recording by the American mezzo-soprano Lorraine Hunt Lieberson from 2003, however, is one that readers are especially encouraged to become acquainted with if they have not already done so.