J. S. Bach's Passions in Nineteenth-Century America

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J. S. BACH’S PASSIONS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA

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Dedicated to my loving, supportive family,

and to the One for whom the Passions were composed.

Soli Deo Gloria.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables ........................................................................................................................................ vi
List of Figures .......................................................................................................................................... vii
Abstract ................................................................................................................................................ viii
1. INTRODUCTION: BACH’S MUSIC IN EARLY AMERICA .............................................................. 1
2. BETHLEHEM AND BOSTON ........................................................................................................ 25
3. TWO ENSEMBLES, TWO CONDUCTORS .................................................................................. 55
4. PREMIERES AND PERFORMANCE PRACTICE ....................................................................... 78
5. CONCLUSION .............................................................................................................................. 114
Bibliography ........................................................................................................................................ 123
Biographical Sketch .......................................................................................................................... 140
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Comparison of Movements Cut from Performances of the *St. Matthew Passion* ........96

Table 2: Comparison of Ensemble Sizes for Performances of the *St. Matthew* and *St. John Passions* ..........................................................110
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Johann Christian Till’s Copy of J. S. Bach’s "Ein Feste Bürg ist Unser Gott"
   Cover Page
   Moravian Music Foundation, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
   PSB 96.7 January 1824 ................................................................. 36

Figure 2: Johann Christian Till’s Copy of J. S. Bach’s “Ein Feste Bürg ist Unser Gott”
   First Page of the Keyboard Score
   Moravian Music Foundation, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
   PSB 96.7 January 1824 ................................................................. 37

Figure 3: John Frederick Wolle in 1929
   Courtesy of the Bethlehem Bach Choir Archives ............................... 58

Figure 4: H&H Act of Incorporation, Approved 9 February, 1816
   Re-printed in the Act of Incorporation and By-Laws of the
   Handel and Haydn Society with the Trust Deed
   Creating a Permanent Fund, 1867 Edition,
   Courtesy of the Handel and Haydn Society Archives ........................ 66

Figure 5: Carl Zerrahn, H&H Scrapbook 3, p. 39
   Article on the Fourth Triennial Festival
   Courtesy of the Handel and Haydn Society Archives ........................ 73

Figure 6: Ticket to the First Triennial Festival
   H&H Scrapbook 2: Tickets, Cards, Etc. to 1914, p. 3
   Courtesy of the Handel and Haydn Society Archives ........................ 74

Figure 7: Oliver Ditson Receipt for Engraving Scores, 1871
   Courtesy of the Handel and Haydn Society Archives ........................ 80

Figure 8: 1879 Bach’s St. Matthew Passion Program, Part I
   Courtesy of the Handel and Haydn Society Archives ........................ 83

Figure 9: Passion Music Ad, Bethlehem Globe-Times XXIL, no. 101, May 31, 1888
   Courtesy of the Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, PA ............................ 86
ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the two American premieres of Johann Sebastian Bach’s Passions: the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston’s performance of the St. Matthew Passion in the Boston Music Hall on 11 April, 1879, and the Bethlehem Choral Union’s performance of the St. John Passion in the Bethlehem Parochial School on 5 June, 1888. Even in Europe, these works had lain dormant in the years following J. S. Bach’s death. The St. Matthew Passion was first revived by Felix Mendelssohn in a concert setting in 1829 in Berlin, but neither the St. Matthew nor the St. John Passion had been performed in their entirety in America until these two ensembles in Boston and Bethlehem took on the task. The size of the performing ensembles required for each work and the difficulty of the music made this task particularly challenging. In addition, both of these works were intended by Bach to be performed for the Good Friday services during Passion Week, yet neither of the American premieres occurred in churches or worship services, but in a concert hall and a parochial school.

Viewing the Boston and Bethlehem premieres in comparison to Mendelssohn’s performance of the St. Matthew Passion sheds light on how both European and American ensembles viewed the Passions as adaptable to specific contexts: the instrumentation, the amount of the work performed, and the performance language, were all varied amongst the premieres. Further, the two American premieres were strongly influenced by their respective place environments and reflected the particular ideologies of the premiering ensembles. By studying historical documents such as newspaper ads, concert reviews, programs, and financial records, as well as the conductors’ personal papers and music collections, this document compares and contrasts the histories of the two communities, ensembles, conductors, approaches to
performance practice, and performances themselves in order to understand how elements of the sacred are still inherent in these works even when performed in secular environments for diverse audiences. Ultimately, this thesis will argue for the importance of these American premieres in setting the stage for a broad reception of Bach’s sacred music in America.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: BACH’S MUSIC IN EARLY AMERICA

This thesis explores the two American premieres of Johann Sebastian Bach’s Passions, which both occurred in the late nineteenth century in two cities with historically active musical cultures. The first complete American performance of the St. Matthew Passion was given by the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston, in the Boston Music Hall, in 1879, while the first complete American performance of the St. John Passion was given by the Bethlehem Choral Union, in the Bethlehem Parochial School Hall, in 1888. These seemingly late dates should not be surprising, as even in Europe these works had lain dormant in the years following J. S. Bach’s death. The St. Matthew Passion was first revived by Felix Mendelssohn in a concert setting in 1829 with the Singakademie in Berlin, and subsequently became popular in Europe, but neither the St. Matthew nor the St. John Passion had been performed in their entirety in America until these two ensembles in Boston and Bethlehem took on the task. The size of performing ensembles required for a nineteenth-century presentation of each work and the difficulty of the music made premiering these pieces in the United States particularly challenging. In addition, both works were intended by J. S. Bach to be performed in Lutheran churches for the Good Friday services during Passion Week, yet neither of the American premieres occurred in churches or worship services, but in a concert hall and a parochial school. All of these factors are integral to understanding the context and significance of the first American performances of the Passions.

While the Mendelssohn revival brought Bach’s music to the attention of European musicians, it also spurred Americans’ interest in Bach, as many Americans wanted to follow the latest European trends in the arts and culture. Though Americans’ fascination and emulation of European popular culture may have been an attempt to appear sophisticated, Bach’s music
became beloved in its own right, following some initial resistance. This project will help
determine how the American premieres of the Passions presented these two sacred works in
secular contexts, how the contexts diverged from Bach’s original intent, and the way this created
a wider interest and a more diverse audience for Bach’s music in the United States.

My goal for this thesis is to present a new way of looking at the first two American
performances of the St. Matthew Passion and St. John Passion. Many sources describe only one
of the premieres. Few investigate both premieres, and none have juxtaposed the two in depth.
While focusing on one premiere at a time is certainly an important task, exploring the similarities
and differences between these two premieres will benefit both scholars of nineteenth-century
American history and music, as well as Bach scholars. The performance practice of these two
ensembles performing Baroque works in nineteenth-century America will add to the ongoing
performance practice studies and debates. Viewing these in comparison to Mendelssohn’s
presentation of the St. Matthew Passion in his European revival may shed light on how European
trends did (or did not) influence American performance practice of the same works. Based on my
studies of the archival sources surrounding these performances and a study of Mendelssohn’s
original performance of the St. Matthew Passion, I believe that there was not a standardized
performance practice for these works during the nineteenth century. The size of ensembles, the
instrumentation, the amount of the work performed, the language of performance, were all varied
amongst the premieres. They were considered adaptable to specific contexts. Scholars of the
Handel and Haydn Society, the Bethlehem Choral Union, and the Bethlehem Bach Choir will
find new angles and comparisons between the two ensembles helpful in their own institutional
research.
As a lover of Bach and of sacred music, I am interested in uncovering the issues of sacred versus secular lying beneath the surface of these two premieres. Why did the first American performances of these works not occur in churches, especially since many of the musicians came from a background of faith? The tradition of performing sacred works in secular places was certainly no longer a new concept in Europe, but it is significant the first time these sacred works were performed in America, one of which was described by Felix Mendelssohn as “the greatest of Christian works,” the concerts occurred in secular locations.¹ Did this broaden the audience for Bach’s music in America and set a precedent for Bach performance in both sacred and secular locations in this country? Was the sacredness of the works maintained in these places? Is this reflected in modern-day Bach performance practice as seen in ensembles such as the Chicago Bach Project? This is an ensemble made up of Christian musicians who perform these works from a place of personal faith, but in both sacred and secular locations.² They have a diverse audience—some people who attend believe the stories and have ties to the sacred, others simply love Bach’s work from a musical or intellectual standpoint. The first American performances of the Bach Passions set the stage for such a diverse audience to feel welcomed and comfortable attending the performances, whereas if all Bach Passion performances were held in cathedrals or churches, many audience members might not attend in the present day. Many performances of large sacred works are now held in secular locations such as concert halls, so by discussing two early instances in different cultural contexts, this project addresses some of the origins of that tradition in America.

Many excellent sources have contributed to my research and knowledge of the issues and history surrounding these first American performances. Paul Larson has written extensively on

John Frederick Wolle and his ensemble, the Bethlehem Choral Union, in his books *An American Musical Dynasty* and *Bach for a Hundred Years*, tracing events and people surrounding both Wolle and the Choral Union. Larson drew from older sources written by the historian of the Bethlehem Bach Choir, Raymond Walters, one of which is entitled *The Bethlehem Bach Choir: An Historical and Interpretive Sketch*. The Bethlehem Choral Union was a predecessor of the Bach Choir, thus Walters begins his book with a bit of history on both the Choral Union and on music in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Walters also wrote an important article, “Bach at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania,” which provides additional details on early Moravian Music, the Collegium Musicum, Philharmonic Society, Choral Union, and Wolle’s personal encounter with Bach’s music. Two other articles contribute pertinent information about the history of the Choral Union: Robin Leaver’s “The Revival of the *St. John Passion*: History and Performance Practice.” Leaver traces the history of some *Passion* performances since Mendelssohn’s revival, details the Choral Union’s performance of the *Messiah*, recounts several newspaper reports and letters from Wolle to a soloist, determines that the Novello edition of the *St. John Passion* must have been used based on the surviving evidence, compares the few known details of the performance with the performance of Philipp Wolfrum (Wolle’s fellow Rheinberger student), and describes aspects of Wolle’s performance. Leaver’s other article, “New Light on the Pre-History of the Bach Choir of Bethlehem,” gives a bit more information on the *St. John Passion* premiere, but focuses on correspondence between Wolle and a soloist, Mrs. Estes, as Wolle was attempting to perform the *St. Matthew Passion* after the success of the *St. John Passion* premiere. Albert Rau provides another useful article about Bethlehem’s musical culture in an article entitled “Development of Music in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania,” while Nola Reed Knouse, as editor of a compilation of
essays, provides even more details and basic history of both the music and the place of Bethlehem in "The Music of the Moravian Church in America."

The historical context and background of the Handel and Haydn Society (H&H) is equally as important to this research. The "History of the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston Massachusetts," edited by Charles Perkins and John S. Dwight, provides both an extensive background on the Society itself as well as minute details and reviews of the concerts. This includes the many various stages of the "St. Matthew Passion" rehearsals and performances that led up to the full premiere in 1879. More background on the society and details of the performances may be found in H. Earle Johnson’s "Hallelujah, Amen!: The Story of the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston." A source using information from both of these earlier works is "The Handel and Haydn Society: Bringing Music to Life for 200 Years." Teresa Neff and Jan Swafford edited a compilation of essays into this two-hundred year anniversary book, which lends historical details, wonderful accounts of changes in the ensemble through the years, information on various conductors and financial issues, as well as beautiful photographs of the ensemble, facsimiles of tickets, and facsimiles of programs. Early nineteenth-century Boston is described in detail in Michael Broyles’ book "Music of the Highest Class: Elitism and Populism in Antebellum Boston;" this also contains information on the Handel and Haydn Society. The publication most specific to the American premiere of the "St. Matthew Passion" is an article by Grant Cook entitled “Bach in Boston: The Emergence of the ‘St. Matthew Passion,’ from 1868 to 1879.” This describes the H&H’s various stages of performance of the "St. Matthew Passion," as the Society gave performances in 1871, 1874, and 1876, but did not present the work in entirety until 1879. The most important source for studies of the musical history of Boston itself were the two volumes of "Music in Colonial Boston, 1630–1820." This compilation describes numerous aspects
of Boston’s early musical life including the instruments available, the earliest concerts, psalmody, military music, and the tradition of organ building.

It is also important to provide background information on the Mendelssohn Bach Revival, which was the catalyst for not only the revival of Bach’s music in Europe, but also the interest American conductors began to have in Bach’s music. Books such as Gerald Hendrie’s *Mendelssohn’s Rediscovery of Bach* and Celia Applegate’s *Bach in Berlin: Nation and Culture in Mendelssohn’s Revival of the “St. Matthew Passion”* give wonderful background on this performance. Applegate’s book also discusses the perception of sacred vs. secular in the nineteenth century, providing insight into why large sacred choral-orchestral works stopped being performed in German Protestant churches in the nineteenth century. Donald Mintz’s “Some Aspects of the Revival of Bach” provides specific details of the performance, describes how Bach’s instrumental music was never entirely forgotten, even in the nineteenth century, and relates letters from Zelter, articles from Adolf Bernhard Marx and Carl Maria von Weber, and other material surrounding the performance. Michael Marrisen’s “Religious Aims in Mendelssohn’s 1829 Berlin-Singakademie Performances of Bach’s St. Matthew Passion” describes the cuts to the score made by Mendelssohn and uses historical background and source material such as letters from Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel to speculate as to why these particular movements would have been removed from the performance. The most recent source is an article by Peter Ward Jones entitled “Mendelssohn's Performances of the 'Matthäus-Passion': Considerations of the Documentary Evidence.” This article explores both the 1829 and subsequent performances of the *St. Matthew Passion*, looking at archival resources, Mendelssohn’s scores, and correspondence, determining details that have been overlooked up to this point.
Historiography and reception are contributing factors to this thesis, and sources from these areas provide both background information and key insights into how audiences perceived this music. One particularly pertinent work, Volume V of *Bach Perspectives* (ed. Steven Crist), entitled “Bach in America,” contains numerous essays ranging from how Bach’s music came to America, to various musicians who became Bach experts, to the reception of Bach’s music in New York City. All of this lays a solid foundation for this discussion of Bach premieres in America. Karl Kroeger’s article “Johann Sebastian Bach in Nineteenth-Century America” also gives background material on the concept of Bach’s works beginning to be performed in America during this time. H. Earle Johnson’s *First Performances in America to 1900: Works with Orchestra* is an extremely useful resource, as it details not only the premieres of important works in the United States, but also lists the place, ensemble, and specifics of those performances. It also provides information on the subsequent performances of each work.

The study of place is also important in understanding concepts of sacred vs. secular in the context of these premieres. Three books have been especially helpful in shaping my sense of the importance of place. Denise Von Glahn’s *The Sounds of Place: Music and the American Cultural Landscape* helped me begin to understand how place shapes both music composed in (or about) that place and music performed in that place. Belden Lane’s *Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality* provides a discussion of how places come to be viewed as sacred, and how a place considered sacred by one person may be considered secular by another. This is important as the two premieres discussed in this thesis occur in what may be viewed as secular environments, but the works themselves were sacred in their original conception and performance. I found David Chidester and Edward Tabor
Linethal’s *American Sacred Space* to be helpful in understanding how sacred space is created and designated.

My archival research at the Central Moravian Church Archives, the Moravian Music Foundation Archives, the Bethlehem Bach Choir Archives in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, as well as the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston Archives in Boston, Massachusetts, and the archival resources available in the Boston Public Library Rare Books Collection was central to this thesis. Some of the most important documents I found were articles and reviews in such publications as *Dwight’s Journal of Music* and the *Bethlehem Globe-Times* have proven invaluable, as they provide both information on what was occurring and insight into how the people of the time viewed these premieres and performances. Frederick Wolle’s papers and scores give us a better understanding of his life and his approach to music. His sketches and notes for an autobiography, though never published, give excellent details about his personal biography, as well as information on how he viewed himself and what he thought was important in his life. Genealogy records and family correspondence provide insight into his forefathers’ lives and his early years. Programs and advertisements for the Philharmonic Society concerts give an idea of what the musical culture of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania was like leading up to and during the time of the Bethlehem Choral Union. Entries from the Central Church Diary and the Minutes of the Board of Elders serve to establish dates, places, and community sentiments and opinions about the Choral Union concerts and musical choices. These records also chronicle the Board and church’s hesitation to allow concerts in the church sanctuary; this conflict is what ultimately led to the Bethlehem Choral Union performing the *St. John Passion* in a secular location rather than in the church. Receipts and correspondence from Bethlehem’s earlier years detail the existence of musical culture there long before the Choral Union was founded.
For the Handel and Haydn Society, programs from festivals and concerts leading to the full premiere of the *Passion* in 1879 provide an idea of the ensemble’s repertoire and the works that led up to the performance of Bach. Ledgers and receipts detailing the expenditures of the Society help one understand both the way the Society functioned and concepts about the Bostonian culture surrounding it, as do tickets to the performances, choir tickets, choir audition papers, and suspension/dismissal slips. The receipt from Oliver Dixon’s engraving and printing of the *St. Matthew Passion* scores provides the number of copies printed, and the dates the music was ordered and delivered. Correspondence between members, directors, and presidents gives a more personal perspective on the inner workings of the Society and the lives of the people therein. Personal correspondence relating to the conductor Carl Zerrahn and newspaper clippings describing him help fill in an otherwise scarce amount of biographical information about this individual. The official Records of the Society from the years of the Passion performances lend an idea of when the work began to be discussed, when it truly became a part of the Society’s performance repertoire, and what rehearsals and performances of this work were like. Newspaper reviews describe the musical details of the performances, and some remark on the sense of the Holy present even in a secular environment.

In order to begin this task, I will give a brief overview of why Bach’s music was not widely known in America until the nineteenth century. Indeed, the *Passions* served somewhat as introductions to Bach’s works, being performed in the United States before, or to many more people than, many of the cantatas and smaller works by Bach. The following section details the history of Bach’s music in America, as well as the issue of Bach’s sacred works being performed in secular locations. This is an issue with which both the Handel and Haydn Society and the Bethlehem Choral Union had to grapple, and which will form a large part of this thesis.
Bach in America

In 1871, at the Second Triennial Festival of the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston, this ensemble sang a portion of J. S. Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* for the first time. The Society had been around for fifty-six seasons and had sung large choral-orchestral works by Handel, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Spohr, Schumann, Beethoven, and others; many of these performances were American or Boston premieres.\(^3\) In 1868, the Society began their long journey of printing, rehearsing, and performing Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* by commissioning the printing of the scores. They first gave “selections” in 1871, then in 1874 performed a larger portion of this work.\(^4\) The writer of the program notes for the 1874 performance decided to address an issue that had been on everyone’s minds: the *Passion* was much more directly linked to scripture and liturgy than many of the other choral-orchestral works they had performed, as the *Passion* tells the crucifixion story, the darkest in the Christian tradition, using both narrative prose and a hefty amount of scriptural quotation. Indeed, Bach’s whole intent in composing the piece was for use in a liturgical Good Friday service. The writer declares: “Then, again, if the Passion-music was meant for a church-service, it is none the less available for concert performance, after the manner of an oratorio; and in this way it is given year after year in the chief concert-halls of Germany. Such music is indeed too broad, too generous and catholic for any positive and actual church: it belongs to an ideal, universal church, if such we can conceive of…”\(^5\)

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\(^4\) Book of Programs, Second Triennial Festival, May, 1871, Handel and Haydn Society Archives, Folder: Premieres 1859–1965, The Handel and Haydn Society, Boston, MA; Book of Programs from the Third Triennial Festival, 1874, Boston Public Library, Handel and Hayden MS 5084 Box 7, Folder 33, Programs April 1870–December 1874, Courtesy of the Trustees of the BPL/Rare Books.

\(^5\) Book of Programs from the Third Triennial Festival, 1874, Notes, p. 27–28, Boston Public Library, Handel and Hayden MS 5084 Box 7, Folder 33, Programs April 1870–December 1874, Courtesy of the Trustees of the BPL/Rare Books.
This idea of the *Passions* as belonging to a universal church, of being sacred in an all-encompassing way and touching audiences of any spirituality, would be continued as the Handel and Haydn Society (H&H) performed the *St. Matthew* through the years leading up to its full premiere in 1879. The piece was treated with respect, and the aspects of the sacred were evident to singers, audience, and reviewers. The Handel and Haydn Society was not the only ensemble to approach this question of performing Bach’s sacred *Passions* in a secular space. Years later, the Bethlehem Choral Union would face the issue of not being allowed to perform a sacred concert of Handel’s *Messiah* in their preferred church edifice, forcing them to look elsewhere for a musical sanctuary for following performances, one of which would be the premiere of Bach’s *St. John Passion* in 1888. In addition to facing the same sacred vs. secular location question, the H&H and the Choral Union were actually aware of one another’s Bach premieres, which provides an intriguing beginning to the story.

On Friday, 25 May, 1888, a newspaperman from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, reported that he had sent an inquiry to Maestro Carl Zerrahn of the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston. The letter relayed the information that the Bethlehem Choral Union would perform Johann Sebastian Bach’s *St. John Passion* on 5 June, 1888, and the ensemble was curious as to whether or not this would be the American premiere of the work. In response to a previous inquiry H. E. Krehbiel, a well-known music critic and editor of the New York *Tribune*, had suggested that the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston might have already performed it; they had premiered Bach’s entire *St. Matthew Passion* in America in 1879, which established their reputation as interpreters and

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6 While performing *Messiah* in a secular space was by no means unusual, the fact that the elders of the Moravian Church were uncomfortable with a concert being held in their space seems contradictory to their history of performing European Classical music in their worship services, highlighting the difference between sacred music in a worship service setting vs. in a concert performance.
presenters of Bach’s music. The day of the concert, the ensemble received a reply from Zerrahn: the H&H had not performed the St. John Passion in its entirety, making the Bethlehem Choral Union’s concert the American premiere. John Frederick Wolle, conductor of the Bethlehem Choral Union, announced the happy news at the beginning of the concert, and “this announcement brought forth much applause,” according to an article published in the Bethlehem Globe-Times on the day following the premiere.

Why had these works not been performed in their entirety in America until 1879 and 1888? The nation was well established and expanding, the Civil War was over, and events such as public concerts were gaining more and more popularity. Why had the Passions, and indeed much of the music of J. S. Bach, seemingly been overlooked until this point?

After Johann Sebastian Bach’s death in 1750, much of his music was forgotten. He had been known throughout his life primarily as an organist. The Classical style became popular during and after his life, and many of his works fell into disuse after his death. However, several devoted musicians kept the music from being completely lost to time: Carl Philip Emmanuel Bach and Johann Nepomuck Schelble performed parts of the B-Minor Mass in the succeeding years, and Bach’s keyboard works were often used for pedagogical purposes, gaining enough popularity to be advertised in the catalogue of publisher Breitkopf & Härtel. The point at which Bach’s works began to gain popularity as performance pieces may be traced to Mendelssohn’s revival of the St. Matthew Passion in 1829. While others, especially composers such as Haydn and Beethoven, had been aware of such large choral-orchestral Passions by Bach, no one had

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performed them in their entirety since Bach’s death. Mendelssohn’s performance ignited an interest in J. S. Bach’s music that spread across Europe and subsequently to America.

The publication of the first set of J. S. Bach’s complete works that began in 1851, the *Bach Gesellschaft* Edition, was an important event for Bach’s eventual popularity in America. John S. Dwight was a key figure in bringing Bach’s works to the attention of Americans through his *Journal*; he incorporated many articles from European publications, including information about the “emerging Bach-Gesellschaft Edition.”¹¹ The *Gesellschaft* was distributed to any who subscribed to the project, and purchase of *Gesellschaft* volumes allowed musicians to study Bach’s works.¹² The original list of American subscribers included eighteen musicians and organizations: Peabody Institute (Baltimore), Harvard Musical Association (Boston, and unconnected to Harvard University), Hugo Leonhard (Boston), Dr. S. P. Tuckerman (Boston), Harvard College Library (Cambridge), R. S. Gray (Ft. Dodge, Iowa), Christopher C. Lyman (Hartford), S. P. Warren (Montreal), Yale College (New-Haven), Clarence Eddy (New York), the Martens Brothers, publishers (New York), Dr. Fr. L. Ritter (New York), G. Schirmer, publisher (New York), Gustav Stechert, book publisher (New York), Theodor [sic] Thomas, (New York), Westermann & Co., publishers (New York), Calvin B. Cady (Oberlin), and Edouard A. Dumouchel (Ogdensburg).¹³ Many of those listed were academic institutions, but some individuals and music dealers also subscribed; music dealers, especially, were then able to make Bach’s music more widely available in America.¹⁴

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¹⁴ Owen, “Bach Comes to America,” 6.
Once Bach’s music was published and more widely available, it was much easier for musicians and ensembles to consider performing some of his more complex choral-orchestral works. However, this did not result in an initial rise in the number of large performances, perhaps because it took quite some time for all of Bach’s works to be readily available in America. Volumes of the *Gesellschaft* were not published all at once, and for performance purposes, parts had to be written out and printed. Two other issues that also likely prevented the immediate popularity of Bach’s works were that few American musicians possessed the technical training to perform works such as the *Passions* and the *B Minor Mass*. In addition, the public was not clamoring for performances of the works; Mary Greer informs us that “to the extent that Bach’s name was familiar at all, it was almost universally associated with music that was old-fashioned and cerebral. Above all, no one had stepped forward to champion his music.”  

Those champions were soon to come forth.

Performances of the smaller keyboard works were apparently quite frequent, even before the publication of the Gesellschaft. Dr. Edward Hodges brought a copy of the Wesley and Horn edition of the *Well Tempered Clavier* from England in 1839 and played from it on a regular basis, though there is no documentation of specific performances. The earliest documented performance of a major work by Johann Sebastian Bach in the United States was a performance of the *Concerto in D Minor for Three Harpsichords and Strings* (BWV 1063), in 1853. This was performed by three Boston pianists, Otto Dresel, Alfred Jaell, and William Scharfenberg, accompanied by a string quartet; all the performers were immigrants from Germany. Organists such as Charles J. Hopkins, John P. Morgan, John Knowles Paine, and Dudley Buck began to bring Bach’s organ works into prominence during the nineteenth century, as well.

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16 Owen, “Bach Comes to America,” 6–8.
Several prominent members of American society who helped champion Bach’s works were John S. Dwight (as mentioned above), Lowell Mason, Theodore Thomas, and Leopold Damrosch. John S. Dwight became enamored with Bach’s music, and reviews, information, and praise of the works may be found throughout his publications.\(^1\) Lowell Mason’s first exposure to Bach’s music came during a trip to Europe in 1837, where he heard the magnificent organ playing of August Wilhelm Bach.\(^2\) While this organist was not a close relation to Johann Sebastian, Celia Applegate informs us that he was “an important performer of his organ works,” and one of Mendelssohn’s teachers.\(^3\) In 1852, Mason took a trip to Germany and purchased the library of Johann Christian Heinrich Rink, which he sent back to Boston. Rinck had studied with a student of Bach’s, Johann Christian Kittel, and had acquired some items from Kittel’s library. Upon Mason’s death, his collection went to Yale in 1872, and with it many of Bach’s keyboard works.\(^4\)

Theodore Thomas partnered with William Mason, Lowell Mason’s son, to create the Mason-Thomas Chamber Concerts, which presented “two concertos by Bach and three works for violin, or violin and piano,” between 1856 and 1864.\(^5\) Thomas and Mason performed the Chaconne from Bach’s Partita in D Minor for Solo Violin (BWV 1004) together as early as 1858 (violin with Mendelssohn’s added piano accompaniment).\(^6\) Thomas’ orchestra subsequently performed many of Bach’s works. These were often transcriptions of organ pieces, such as the Toccata in F Major (BWV 540) and the Passacaglia in C Minor (BWV 582), which were performed in 1865, but they also performed the Orchestral Suites in the years after 1867, the

\(^{118}\) Broyles, "Haupt's Boys: Lobbying for Bach in Nineteenth-Century Boston," 46.
\(^{20}\) Owen, “Bach Comes to America,” 6.
\(^{22}\) Greer, "The Reception of Bach's Music in New York City, 1855–1900," 68.
Brandenburg Concertos, and the Concerto in D Minor for Two Violins (BWV 1043) in 1875.\footnote{Owen, “Bach Comes to America,” 11.}

Leopold Damrosch also brought Bach into concert settings. Greer reports that Damrosch “played a leading role in introducing Bach works to New York audiences. In 1873 he founded the Oratorio Society which, over the course of the next three decades, presented the New York premieres of both the \textit{St. Matthew Passion} (in 1880) and the \textit{B Minor Mass} (in 1900).”\footnote{Greer, “The Reception of Bach’s Music in New York City, 1855–1900,” 58.} Dwight, Mason, Thomas, and Damrosch raised awareness of and interest in Bach’s music through promotion, publications, and performances.

Works by Bach for small ensembles were also rising in popularity. As noted above, the Mason-Thomas Chamber Concerts presented works by Bach from 1856-1864. In 1858, Otto Dresel and his Private Singing Club of Boston gave a performance of Bach’s motet \textit{Fürchte dich nicht} (BWV 228). Dresel was a student of Mendelssohn, so this serves as an excellent example of the connection between the Mendelssohn revival of Bach’s works and their subsequent popularity in America.\footnote{Owen, “Bach Comes to America,” 6–7.}

Owen writes that, along with the rise of conservatories in the United States, Bach’s music “became an integral part of the curriculum at these institutions.”\footnote{Owen, “Bach Comes to America,” 10.} Before 1901, there were forty chamber, orchestral, and choral compositions by Johann Sebastian Bach performed in the United States.\footnote{Greer, “The Reception of Bach’s Music in New York City, 1855–1900,” 47.}

While many solo instrumental works, transcriptions for orchestra, a few cantatas, and various movements from larger works had been performed prior to 1871, the Handel and Haydn

\textsuperscript{23} Owen, “Bach Comes to America,” 11.
\textsuperscript{24} Greer, “The Reception of Bach’s Music in New York City, 1855–1900,” 58.
\textsuperscript{25} Owen, “Bach Comes to America,” 6–7.
\textsuperscript{26} Owen, “Bach Comes to America,” 10. The precise year of Hodges’ copy is unknown, as these editors published the \textit{Well Tempered Clavier} under Birchall’s publishing company from 1810–c.1824 and under Lonsdale from c. 1834 to c. 1845. Since Hodges arrived in America in 1839, nearly any of these dates are possible, though Owens remarks that the copy was “well-worn,” suggesting an earlier edition. For details on other publication information for London editions of this work, see Yo Tomita’s “Most Ingenious, Most Learned, and Yet Practicable Work: The English Reception of Bach’s \textit{The Well-Tempered Clavier} in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century as Seen Through the Editions Published in London,” \textit{Bach Notes} No. 7, Spring 2007.
\textsuperscript{27} Greer, “The Reception of Bach’s Music in New York City, 1855–1900,” 47.
Society’s performance of “selections” from the *St. Matthew Passion* was in no way preceded by anything similar in size or scope in terms of Bach performances. The American Bach repertory continued to grow, but the American premieres of the entire *St. Matthew Passion* in 1879 and the *St. John Passion* in Bethlehem in 1888 were notable in that they were large choral-orchestral premieres given within thirty-five years of the first documented American Bach performance.

The keyboard works, solo pieces, and chamber pieces certainly aided in the rising popularity of Bach’s music, and the premieres of the large choral-orchestral works might never have come about in America had the groundwork not been laid by these smaller pieces. The choral-orchestral works such as the *Passions*, however, required larger numbers of people than a keyboard piece or small chamber piece in order to be performed. Once a group performed one of these works, it was in their repertoire, and could be (and often was) performed again over time. This gave these large works traction by exposing them to both a large number of performers and a large audience base. The sheer size of forces the ensembles decided to implement gave the choral-orchestral works a sort of power, though it also took a large amount of time for the ensembles to become well-versed enough in the appropriate instrumental and vocal techniques needed to perform them.

An additional complicating factor initially inhibiting the performance of large works by Bach was the place of music in America in general. American society had to undergo several stages of development before music could be treated as a vibrant part of the culture. Michael Broyles describes these developments in his book *Music of the Highest Class*: “Prior to 1800 music was considered entertainment. Its sensuous, passionate qualities were recognized,

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28 Owen, “Bach Comes to America,” and Greer, “The Reception of Bach’s Music in New York City, 1855–1900” for a more comprehensive overview of works performed prior to 1871 and 1888.
although sometimes in a negative context (especially in New England).”

The religious movements of the early nineteenth century gave music a chance to become more than just entertainment; it became an integral part of worship services. Because of the nature of the church reform, psalmody became the primary mode of music making. This changed midway through the 1800s, when musical groups outside of the church began to become popular. Broyles writes that “by then [the 1840s] instrumental music was generating an audience and a critical literature that explained its purpose and provided justification for its existence. Ironically those institutions that had spearheaded the reform of sacred music now led the change.”

One such group was the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston.

As the nation approached its centennial, many people in nineteenth-century America believed that to maintain and grow a sophisticated musical culture, they needed to rely upon Europe to supply artistic ideas and culture. Imported goods from Europe were all the rage, and this extended to musical arrivals, be those musicians or musical works. Whatever was popular in Europe had a high probability of becoming popular in the United States. For instance, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, before Mendelssohn’s revival of Bach’s music, works by Handel and Haydn were extremely popular in Europe. That popularity quickly crossed the Atlantic with performances by the Bethlehem community of Haydn’s *The Creation* in 1811 and the H&H premiere of the full *Messiah* in 1818, as well as later performances by the H&H of works such as Haydn’s *The Creation* (1819), Handel’s *Sampson* (1845), and Mendelssohn’s *Elijah* (later in the 1840s).

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Boston and Bethlehem became locations for the premieres of two of J. S. Bach’s greatest choral-orchestral works. These communities were quite different from one another, but both were fertile ground in which Bach’s music would take root, and both had ties to the history of sacred worship music. Boston and Bethlehem had rich musical traditions both in terms of classical music knowledge and performance, and group singing in places such as “singing schools” and churches. Both the Handel and Haydn Society and the Bethlehem Choral Union also had ties to the sacred.

The German Moravian community that resided in Bethlehem had a history of using German hymns and classical music in both their church services and recreation; indeed, in the early years of the community their whole existence revolved around various church services, activities, and the music contained therein. They incorporated musical education into their school system, and viewed it as an equally important part of the curriculum. The first possible Bach connection came in the form of a young man named Johann Christoph Pyrlaeus, who established the first Collegium Musicum in Bethlehem on 13 December, 1744. Born in 1713 in Saxony, Pyrlaeus studied in Leipzig during the time that Bach was there, and “it is highly likely that Pyrlaeus attended either the Thomaskirche or Nicolai-kirche during his student years,” according to Lawrence W. Hartzell. He moved to Pennsylvania in 1740, possibly bringing the knowledge of Bach’s works with him. The Collegium Musicum performed chamber music both in worship

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Society: Bringing Music to Life for 200 Years, (Boston, Massachusetts: David R Godine, Publisher, 2014), 21, 31. Even the name of the Handel and Haydn Society suggests the prestige given to these composers and their works in America.


35 Hartzell, ”Musical Moravian Missionaries, Part I: Johann Christopher Pyrlaeus,” 92.
services and in concerts. While no documentation exists of J. S. Bach’s music being performed in the community during the eighteenth century, despite the Pyrlaeus connection, Johann Christian Till, a member of the community, copied out the cantata *Ein Feste Burg ist Unser Gott*, BWV 80, in 1824. It is highly unlikely that he would have taken the time to copy such a work if there was no plan of performing it; thus it is probable that this work was performed in Bethlehem sometime around or after January 4, 1824, the date on which Till was paid for the work of copying. Where did he get an *Ein Feste Burg ist Unser Gott* manuscript to copy? One possibility is from his teacher, J. F. Peter. Albert Rau wrote that Peter copied the work in 1802, although I was unable to find archival documentation of this. Regardless, it is likely that this Bach manuscript was available in the Moravian community and possibly performed in America many years earlier than any other work by Bach.

Works by many composers, including Mozart and Haydn, were often performed in Bethlehem; the American premiere of Haydn’s *Creation* was arguably given in Bethlehem in 1811. In 1820, the Collegium Musicum became the Philharmonic Society of Bethlehem, which would eventually merge and perform with another group called the Bethlehem Choral Union. This rich history of music education and performance created a culture where music was an expected part of daily life, and thus it flourished.

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39 Paul Larson, *Bach for One Hundred Years: A Social History of the Bach Choir of Bethlehem* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2011), 4. Larson also notes this point, though he claims the year was 1823, contrary to archival records which are marked 1824.
40 Walters, “Bach at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania,” 182.
41 Walters, “Bach at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania,” 182. An example of the two ensembles performing together is a program for the “Third Grand Concert for the Piano Fund,” Moravian Music Foundation, Bethlehem, PSB 1366 Prog A, April 28, 1885.
A culture such as this was ripe for a new musical challenge; it just needed the right conductor and the right composer’s work, which came together in 1888 when John Frederick Wolle conducted the American premiere of J. S. Bach’s *St. John Passion*. His ensemble, the Bethlehem Choral Union, was young, but had performed “entertaining and edifying” concerts of works such as Haydn’s *Creation* and Spohr’s *The Last Judgment*. According to musicologist, Paul Larson, a Moravian concert should be “a unified musical event designed to uplift and cultivate those who attended. That was the view of the Moravians and the view of the Romantics. Both shared the belief that beauty edified the performers and the audience. Rapt attention was expected from everyone. The reward was a spiritual experience.” While these Moravian concerts were not held as part of worship services, there was an element of the sacred present—the deep-rooted faith of the Moravian community fed into their music making, and they intended to give their listeners a taste of the spiritual. During a trip to Germany, which began in 1884, to study with the famous organist Josef Rheinberger, Wolle was introduced to the *St. John Passion* for the first time. He returned to Bethlehem determined to bring the beauty of Bach’s music to his ensemble and community. A community with such deep Christian faith and such extensive musical background was an excellent and fitting place for one of Bach’s *Passions* to be premiered in America.

The other community that would witness a Bach choral-orchestral work’s premiere was Boston, another haven of musical culture. Even before the establishment of the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston, there was a thriving culture of both music-making and musical discourse. The music in the churches was a topic for popular debate, and this led to changes in the music played there. Michael Broyles lists three social developments relevant to this: “the

43 Larson, *Bach for One Hundred Years*, 9–11.
efforts of the Puritan minsters led to the inauguration of singing schools, through which the fuguing tune was propagated, and the fuguing tune itself aroused the ire of the Presbyterian-Congregational reformers, who considered its use in church emblematic of all that was wrong with sacred music.⁴⁴ These singing schools became quite popular, but they apparently did not fix all the problems with singing in early America. The standards of church music began to change, and the educated ministers and musicians were the ones demanding it.⁴⁵ Broyles concludes that “as a consequence, the reform movement of the early nineteenth century had a musical sophistication and emphasis that the earlier attempted reforms did not.”⁴⁶

As music grew more sophisticated, the music industry expanded commercially. This created a cycle of growth: music making improved, so more difficult works were sought; these works often had to be brought from Europe, and/or published in the United States. H. Earle Johnson reports that “a stream of secular publications issued from the dealers, a lively import business in musical instruments and important scores was carried on, and native enterprise, especially in the field of organ and pianoforte manufacture, established the New England influence far and wide.”⁴⁷

One ensemble that was founded upon the principle of improving the state of singing in churches in America was the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston; they later contributed not only to improving the level of music education in America, but also to raising the standards of both musicians and audiences for appreciating difficult works of music.⁴⁸ Many of the ensemble members also sang with their local church choirs, and were involved in Christian sacred music

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⁴⁸ Swafford, "Two Hundred Years: An Overview," 18.
on a regular basis. While the Handel and Haydn Society was not a “church choir” in the traditional sense of belonging to a church body, it was comprised of church members who would have known the stories of the Bible and could resonate with the story behind the *St. Matthew Passion*.

The *St. Matthew Passion* project was lengthy, and reflects both the difficulty of the work and the determination of the ensemble. It took over ten years from the time of ordering the engraving of the scores in 1868 to the actual full performance of the piece in 1879, but the ensemble continually rehearsed and performed small portions of it. After the second performance of a portion of the work in 1874, H&H President Loring Barnes remarked that the Society hoped to eventually perform the work as Bach intended, during Passion Week: “It is sufficient for my purpose at this time to thus refer to the great merit of the performance of a portion of this work and to express the hope that at no distant day the entire composition may be given, by setting apart some day during Passion Week, Good Friday it may be when all the great thoughts of the great master may be, placed before the public in proper form.” This goal was eventually realized in the first American performance of the entire piece on Good Friday, April 11, 1879. The Society was not performing the work in the context of a sacred worship service or church building, rather, in the Boston Music Hall, but they recognized the sanctity of Bach’s original context and intent, and performed it accordingly at its full American premiere.

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50 “Annual Report of Mr. Loring B. Barnes, the President,” Handel and Haydn Society Archives, Scrapbook, vol. 3, The Handel and Haydn Society, Boston, MA.
51 “1879 Bach’s St. Matthew Passion Program, Part I,” Handel and Haydn Society Archives, Folder 190, The Handel and Haydn Society, Boston, MA; and “1879 Bach’s St. Matthew Passion Program, Part II,” Handel and Haydn Society Archives, Handel & Haydn Society Scrapbook, vol. 4, 1874-1887, p. 27, the Handel and Haydn Society, Boston, MA.
While the Handel and Haydn Society and the Bethlehem Choral Union arose from rather different contexts, their goals were the same: to improve the singing of their members/communities through presentation of European sacred works. The conductors had succeeded with works by composers such as Handel and Haydn, but approaching Bach was more difficult given the complexity of the works. Both Carl Zerrahn and J. F. Wolle were adamant that their ensembles should learn and perform Bach’s works no matter how long they had to rehearse. Because of the determination and pedagogical skill of these two individuals, both ensembles were successful in presenting the first full American performances of these two works. Many conductors, composers, and musicians in Europe and America were interested in studying Bach’s music and the portrayal of sacred stories therein, and presenting his music as more than just intellectual. They overcame the popular notion of Bach’s music as “unmelodious, dry, and unintelligible,” as described by Mendelssohn’s fellow revivalist Eduard Devrient before the 1829 revival. These two ensembles were at the forefront of exploring how to connect the choral-orchestral works with American audiences through adaptation, and in the process broaden the appeal of Bach’s music beyond the church and into the concert hall. Even in this more secular space, the Passions would continue to thrive as sacred as part of the “universal church” eloquently described by the writer of the Handel and Haydn Society’s program notes in 1874.

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CHAPTER TWO

BETHLEHEM AND BOSTON

As discussed in the previous chapter, the first American performances of Bach’s *Passions* took place in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and Boston, Massachusetts, and understanding the musical histories of these places is crucial to understanding the subsequent reception history of Bach’s works in this country. In this chapter, I will discuss the background and cultural context of both Bethlehem and Boston, and the ways that the musical culture and history of these cities influenced American performance practice traditions of Bach’s choral-orchestral works.

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, was a German religious settlement in Colonial America, joining a tradition of such settlements begun by the Mennonites at Germantown in 1683. These Moravians sang hymns in worship services and held daily *Singstunden* [singing hours] in Moravian communities, and they carried with them their love of hymnody and instrumental and vocal chamber music to the Colonies. Bethlehem itself was christened and named by Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf on Christmas Eve, 1741, through the singing of a hymn verse referencing the Biblical location of Christ’s birth.

The Moravians used music for both worship services and entertainment. According to the earliest volume of the *Bethlehem Diary*, a manuscript record of daily life in the settlement begun in 1742, the Moravians sang hymns in worship services and held daily *Singstunden* [singing hours].

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meetings] which involved the improvisation of hymns in response to the actions of the Holy Spirit. Community members also wrote hymns to celebrate personal and spiritual occasions, sang hymns on their deathbeds, or, if unable to sing, requested others to sing on their behalf. As they carried their loved ones’ bodies to the community’s cemetery, called the “God’s Acre,” for burial, they sang hymns to help the deceased safely navigate the passage between life and death. Indeed, the importance of singing in the daily life of the Bethlehem community would play an integral role in the desire of residents to offer an early performance of Haydn’s _Creation_ in 1811, beginning a tradition of major choral-orchestral premieres in Bethlehem.

The Moravians were also adamant missionaries, and music was a key facet of their endeavors. Not only did the missionaries sing hymns in services, but they learned the languages of local indigenous populations, as well as surrounding Colonial English, Swedish, and Dutch communities, and translated their hymns into those languages as a spiritual outreach. Perhaps the most famous examples are the hymns translated into various Indian languages such as Mahican and Delaware. Nola Reed Knouse, director of the Moravian Music Foundation, contends that, “The Moravians considered hymn-singing to be the most important means of communicating and expressing spiritual truth,” and cites Christian Ignatius LaTrobe, who wrote in 1811:

> As a great portion of this service consists in the singing of hymns, they endeavoured to make it uniform and harmonious, by encouraging all to join, but checking any dispositions to vociferation in individuals, and have thereby, in some of their settlements, acquired a degree of perfection in congregational singing, which is not attainable where there is no attention to general effect, but where every one is left to suit the strength of his voice, however grating, to the ardour of his feelings, to the vanity of his mind. The organ

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56 For more information and first-hand accounts of singing in the early years of the community, see Kenneth G. Hamilton, ed., _The Bethlehem Diary_, vol. 1 (Bethlehem, Pa.: Archives of the Moravian Church, 1971).
57 For more information on the communities surrounding and affected by Bethlehem’s outreach, see Hamilton, _The Bethlehem Diary_, vol. 1; and John Hill Martin, _Historical Sketch of Bethlehem in Pennsylvania: with Some Account of the Moravian Church_, 2nd ed. with corrections, (Philadelphia, 1873), 21. http://hdl.handle.net/2027/coo1.ark:/13960/t6k08905w.
is directed to accompany the congregation so as not to overpower it, but only to complete and support the harmony of the whole.⁵⁸

This brings us to the question of instruments. LaTrobe mentions an organ in 1811, but what instruments were available in Bethlehem before this date? Members of the congregation had brought sheet music with them from their European homes, and maintained a continual correspondence with Moravian communities in Europe through the transport of both letters and people. Some of the earliest Moravian settlers, members of the First Sea Congregation, brought string instruments on their voyage, and subsequently entertained visiting Indians with their music.⁵⁹ Moravians later owned their own transport ships, such as the SS Irene and the SS Harmony, and passengers were known to bring music manuscripts as well as instruments with them on their transatlantic journeys.⁶⁰ On January 7, 1820, Bethlehem instrument maker Heinrich G. Gütter advertised receiving shipments of instruments from Europe that he would sell and repair.⁶¹ Donald McCorkle confirms that the Moravians brought or constructed many of the earliest instruments used in the American Colonies, the first of which were French horns brought to the Georgia settlement around 1735: "Bethlehem by 1742 possessed flutes, violins, violas da braccio and gamba, and horns. During the following decade they received a clavichord (still preserved), the first trombones for the Trombone Choir, and the first organ (1746)."⁶² They received their first spinet on 25 January, 1744, and the Diary entry for that day notes that “Our

wagon returned this evening from Braunschweig with the spinet which Br. Noldon [Knolton] sent to the congregation from London. We were delighted by it and immediately went about putting it in order, and even though it appeared to be badly damaged, it could be used in the congregation the following day to glorify our sweet Lamb.”

Later on, in 1800, Frederick Bourquin brought the first bassoon. A double bass joined the ranks of Bethlehem instruments in 1806: “it cost $68, it was paid for partly by a donation from the church funds, and by proceeds obtained at a benefit concert,” according to Rufus Grider, historian of Bethlehem’s musical endeavors. Albert Rau notes that these instruments were being used to perform concert music and symphonies, documentable as early as 1750. J. F. Antes, a violin-maker who had been introduced to Joseph Haydn, also contributed to the instrumental life of Bethlehem through building stringed instruments. Another Bethlehem community member, David Tannenberg, became an excellent organ maker, providing a contribution to American music beyond the Moravian sphere; he produced at least thirty-two organs and numerous pianos, harpsichords, and clavichords. Gradually the Moravians assembled quite a collection of instruments which they used to participate in worship services, playing with and alternating with the voices of the congregation; these were also used in funeral processions, concerts, and in leisure activities, such as the following example from the Church Diary in 1744: “Following the hourly intercession, in which the Te Christum laudamus, etc., was

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66 This is validated by an entry in Haydn’s London Notebook; see Irving Lowens and Otto E. Albrecht, Haydn in America, Bibliographies in American Music, no. 5 (Detroit, Mich.: Published for the College Music Society by Information Coordinators, 1979), 17.
sung, the Single Brethren’s Choir, together with many strangers who were present, went about Bethlehem singing, with full musical accompaniment.”

The trombone choir participated in daily musical life by heralding most forms of community news from the tower of the church and providing forms of outdoor worship and entertainment. They even saved the settlers from hostile Indians on 25 December, 1755. The community had been living in fear and guarding Bethlehem carefully during the Indian Uprising, especially following a horrible massacre of Moravian missionaries in the nearby settlement of Gnadenhütten in November. On Christmas morning, some Indians were hiding on the outskirts of Bethlehem, hoping to light some of the buildings on fire. Bishop Joseph Levering recounts that the sound of the trombones playing the Christmas morning chorale “struck fear into their hearts, so that they slipped away into the woods in dread of some unearthly power guarding Bethlehem.” Whether in concerts or everyday happenings, the instruments became an integral part of community life, and their existence, as well as the constant additions, meant that Bethlehem musicians could soon perform choral-orchestral works without outside aid. The community was, so to speak, quickly becoming orchestrally self-sufficient. All that was needed was a bit more musical training and actual printed musical scores for larger works.

In terms of musical ensembles, many of the first music directors in the American Moravian settlements had studied at the theological academy in Jena, where they played in a collegium musicum run by Johann Nikolaus Bach, a cousin of J. S. Bach. These people were integral links between the music of Europe and America; they were well aware of how to make good ensemble music, and this is one reason that Bethlehem was able to form a collegium musicum and play difficult music early in their history. The first mention of the Bethlehem

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Collegium Musicum occurs in the Bethlehem Church Diary on 19 December, 1744; the ensemble played for the Lovefeast that day. This ensemble was founded in 1744 by Johann Christoph Pyrlaeus, who “conducted the Collegium Musicum which he had organized on 13 December, 1744, for the purpose of improving the standard of church music.” Pyrlaeus, who was introduced in Chapter 1, was apparently a highly trained musician who could sing, play the spinet and organ, and coach vocalists and instrumentalists. Born at Pansa, in the Duchy of Saxony, in 1713, Pyrlaeus studied theology and music at the University of Leipzig, and it is entirely possible that he knew, or was at least aware of, J. S. Bach and his music. As a student, he was surrounded by German music of the late Baroque period, and likely also had connections to the collegium run by Bach in Leipzig. It is not surprising, then, that Pyrlaeus would be the first to establish a collegium in the Colonies.

Members of the Bethlehem community also played chamber music, such as purely wind pieces known as *Harmoniemusik*, and string quartets, as well as larger works in the context of the collegium. The Single Brethren performed chamber music by Mozart and Haydn in their own house, while the Single Sisters kept a string quartet with the proper instrumentation in the Single Sisters’ House. Norton points out that it was quite likely that this ensemble played the Haydn quartets as soon as the music arrived in Bethlehem. A quartet was formed in 1795 to specifically play Haydn’s quartets, though scholars are unsure if this would have been the earliest time in Bethlehem or if the Single Sisters or Single Brethren might have played them

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73 Mabel Haller, “Moravian Influences on Higher Education in Colonial America,” 218.
74 Haller, “Moravian Influence on Higher Education in Colonial America,” 218.
previously. The concept of a string quartet would play a vital role in the *St. John Passion* premiere, as I will discuss in Chapter Four.

M. D. Herter Norton writes that by 1780, Bethlehem’s Collegium Musicum “consisted of two 1st violins, two 2nd [sic] violins, one viola, two ‘cellos, two French horns, two flutes; an oboe and a bassoon being added later.” Hans Theodore David posits that, based upon the copies of music they owned, by the 1790s the Collegium Musicum “was able to play symphonies by van Maldere and Carl Stamitz. Works by John Christian Bach, Haydn, Rosetti, and by other composers whose fame has faded away were at one time or another added to the repertoire. The orchestra must have been an impressive group.”

All who heard the Collegium Musicum were impressed, including Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, and Samuel Adams. When the Marquis de Chastellux visited Bethlehem in 1780, he “was astonished with the delicious sounds of an Italian Concerto, but [his] surprise was still greater on entering a room where the performers turned out to be common workmen of different trades, playing for their amusement.” Through the years the ensemble performed works by both Moravian composers and prominent European composers such as Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, C. P. E Bach, Hasse, Graun, J. C. F. Bach, and Johann Ernst Bach. This Collegium Musicum, so dear and so prominent in the community, would grow and shape into an ensemble that would perform several American premieres of European choral-orchestral works.

Who was the guiding force behind the Collegium Musicum after J. C. Pyrlaeus? Others carried on his legacy, such as John Erik Westerman and Immanuel Nitschmann, who, Grider

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77 Norton, “Haydn in America (Before 1820),” 320.
78 Norton, “Haydn in America (Before 1820),” 320.
informs us, “brought the first copies of Haydn’s Quartettes and Symphonies” when he came from Europe, and aided the Collegium by leading, playing first violin, and copying a large amount of music, including parts for Handel’s Messiah. It was, however, a young man from Holland that would cultivate and shape the Collegium Musicum into its role as an excellent ensemble worthy of premiering (in America) works by Haydn, Mozart, and Bach, though he would not accomplish this feat alone. In 1770, this young man named John Frederick Peter arrived in Bethlehem and became director of music for the community. He was born in Holland, as the son of a Moravian pastor, and studied instruments. Albert Rau traces his musical life: he became “a competent performer on the violin, the clavier, and the organ. Through the efforts of an unknown teacher or series of teachers, he acquired a knowledge of harmony and counterpoint, as well as an acquaintance with the then developing sonata form.” He performed in chamber concerts at his school, and spent an incredible amount of time copying the works of prominent European composers. Rau lists many of these copies that he brought to the United States, including “twelve of the early works of Haydn, some for strings and some for an orchestra of two horns, two oboes, and strings; five works by J. W. A. Stamitz; three by J. C. Bach; four by J. C. F. Bach; six by Boccherini; five by Abel; two by Zanetti; and a dozen more scattered among names not found in any encyclopaedia.”

Peter continued copying and composing his own works throughout his life, supplying Bethlehem, and other Moravian communities with an enormous amount of beautiful repertoire. Indeed, Peter is credited with composing the earliest examples of American chamber music, the

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86 Rau, “John Frederick Peter,” 309.
87 For a description of all the communities to which Peter was called, and in which he likely copied music, see David, “Musical Life in the Pennsylvania Settlements of the Unitas Fratrum.”
six “Salem Quintets,” which are scored for two violins, two violas, and a cello.  

Knola Reed Knouse informs us that in “Moravian circles,” he is known as “the consummate writer of fine anthems.” As a composer, “his sacred music shows him to have been a man of genuine talent and true devotion. He made brilliant use of the stringed instruments at his disposal and employed cleverly up to ten wind-instruments in his choral compositions,” according to Hans Theodore David.

In terms of his copying, Peter was apparently systematic and organized. After writing the parts on small sheets, he added an organ reduction. He used figured bass in the organ part, and likely improvised along with the chorus and orchestra after the parts were learned. Two of Peter’s more extensive copies are the complete parts of Graun’s Tod Jesu, which would become a favorite of the Moravians, and Haydn’s Creation. Peter was the sole copyist for the Creation parts. He supposedly received the 1803 version of the score in 1807, and was paid ten pounds, seven shillings, for copying all the parts. David believes this was Peter’s “final homage to Haydn, whom he had begun to esteem when Haydn was still rather unknown.” This was not the only set of Creation parts Peter copied, however. The Creation was also performed in Salem, North Carolina in 1829, by the group of Moravians there, using a second set of scores copied by Peter. The existence of two copies shows Peter’s dedication to spreading the beauty of this piece to multiple communities through copying the piece multiple times. Peter was creating a library of European pieces for Moravian use. These works were performed for years in Bethlehem and

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93 Carter, “Early Performances of Haydn’s Creation in America: The Moravian Connection.”
surrounding communities, serving both as performance pieces and as stepping-stones to larger choral-orchestral works that would be performed in the future.

One of Peter’s most important legacies was his students, including Johann Christian Till and Peter Wolle.⁹⁴ Amongst other excellent musical endeavors, J. C. Till copied the Bach manuscript *Ein Feste Burg ist Unser Gott* in 1824, thus contributing to what may have been the first performance of any J. S. Bach piece in America (see figures 1 and 2).⁹⁵ Peter Wolle was a teacher and relative of Theodore Wolle, who taught John Frederick Wolle, who in turn led the Bethlehem Bach Choir to incredibly important premieres of two of J. S. Bach’s choral-orchestral works in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁹⁶

Even with his many contributions, Peter recognized his spiritual life as the most important aspect of his existence. In his *Lebenslauf*, a document all Moravians created to describe their spiritual journey as they neared the time of death, he only mentions music twice.⁹⁷ He thanks God that his musical talent was able to contribute to the community’s worship, and he writes how music had brought him the temptation of pride; David remarks that this may have been in reference to composing the string quintets, which were purely secular; music for use in church was encouraged by the Moravians, but intentionally composing pieces such as this, for purely outside entertainment, may have been frowned upon.⁹⁸ Thus, while composing, copying,

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⁹⁴ Rau, “John Frederick Peter,” 313.
⁹⁵ Bach, Johann Sebastian, “Ein Feste Bürg ist Unser Gott,” Copied by Johann Christian Till, Moravian Music Foundation, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, PSB 96.7 January 1824; Larson, *Bach for One Hundred Years*, 4. Albert Rau states that Peter actually copied this work in 1802, (Rau, “John Frederick Peter,” 312) but I was unable to confirm this in my archival research or my conversations with archivists who work regularly with the Bethlehem and Winston-Salem collections. The earliest documented Bach performance in the United States was of the Concerto in D Minor for Three Harpsichords and Strings (BWV 1063) in 1853.
⁹⁶ For more information on the Wolle family, see Larson, *An American Musical Dynasty*.
⁹⁸ David, “Musical Life in the Pennsylvania Settlements of the Unitas Fratrum,” 41. David highlights that while purely instrumental European music was often used in the church, for a member of the Moravian Church to compose such music with no sacred intent may have been viewed as vain and not “befitting a true servant of the Lord.”
and teaching music played a central role in his life and enjoyments, Peter was a true Moravian: nothing came before his love and devotion to the Savior.

The other person credited with an integral role in the Collegium Musicum at this time was David Moritz Michael, who Knouse writes “revitalized the Bethlehem collegium musicum and conducted the performance of Haydn’s Creation that may have been its American premiere.” Born in Kühnhausen, Germany, in 1751, Michael arrived in America in 1795, after becoming a Moravian at age thirty. Claypool gives details of Michael’s early life: prior to his immigration Michael “had performed as an oboist and French horn player in a number of German theater orchestras and military bands.” He reportedly provided his friends with entertainment by playing duets on two French horns at the same time.

He, like Peter, was a composer, though he specialized in Harmoniemusik. His masterpieces are considered to be the two Die Wasserfahrt works, which are pieces for wind ensemble that were played on a riverboat, like Handel’s Water Music. Michael also wrote anthems, contributing to the Moravians’ choral music collection. Knouse remarks that his wind works show that his “mastery of the instrumental capabilities and timbres . . . his use of tone color—sometimes in contrasts, sometimes skillfully blended—is an integral part of the success of these compositions.”

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99 Knouse, The Music of the Moravian Church in America, 279.
102 Knouse, The Music of the Moravian Church in America, 204.
103 Knouse, The Music of the Moravian Church in America, 279.
104 Knouse, The Music of the Moravian Church in America, 204.
Figure 1: Johann Christian Till’s Copy of J. S. Bach’s “Ein Feste Bürg ist Unser Gott”

Cover Page
Moravian Music Foundation, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
PSB 96.7 January 1824
Figure 2: Johann Christian Till’s Copy of J. S. Bach’s “Ein Feste Bürg ist Unser Gott”
First Page of the Keyboard Score
Moravian Music Foundation, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
PSB 96.7 January 1824
Upon his arrival in America in 1795, Michael started out in the community of Nazareth. He created a consistent schedule of concert activity, about one concert a week, for the *Collegium Musicum* in Nazareth, often including Haydn symphonies. In 1796 the Nazareth Collegium Musicum appears with enormous frequency, attesting to both Michael’s leadership and to the popularity of Haydn’s works in the community.\footnote{Lowens and Albrecht, *Haydn in America*, 70–92.} Irving Lowens notes that “it is surprising that the tiny settlement of Nazareth in Pennsylvania, a dot on today’s map, has more documented performances of Haydn through 1809 than any other American city except New York.”\footnote{Lowens and Albrecht, *Haydn in America*, 7.}

Michael’s inspiration travelled with him to Bethlehem when he was transferred there in 1808, and the Bethlehem Collegium Musicum “increased spectacularly.”\footnote{Claypool, “Archival Collections of the Moravian Music Foundation and Some Notes on the Philharmonic Society of Bethlehem,” 186.} David notes the increase in the number of concerts: “between 1807 and 1819, 241 concerts took place; 28 alone in 1808 and 36 in 1809. The receipts amounted altogether to $301.73, averaging $1.30 for each concert. Hall, fuel, and light were provided by the community; thus the receipts sufficed, in a modest way, to furnish instruments, strings, some printed music, and bindings for the more frequently used items.”\footnote{David, “Musical Life in the Pennsylvania Settlements of the Unitas Fratrum,” 50–51.} Between the leadership, musical copies, and increasing numbers of performances, the Collegium Musicum was rapidly developing into an ensemble that would be able perform large works such as Haydn’s *Creation*; Michael thus helped boost Bethlehem’s concert life and encouraged the performance of works by the most popular European composers. The collegium also performed choral-orchestral works by Pergolesi, Graun, and Nitschmann.\footnote{Claypool, “Archival Collections of the Moravian Music Foundation and Some Notes on the Philharmonic Society of Bethlehem,” 186.}

The soundscape of Bethlehem was quickly filling with European music and grander choral-orchestral sounds.
Peter and Michael led and coached the ensemble together, and possibly even provided some instrumental instruction—but where did the instrumentalists come from in the first place? The Moravians were not just devout Christians—they were adamant about the importance of education for both young men and young women. From the earliest years of the Bethlehem settlement, Benigna Zinzendorf founded the Young Ladies’ Seminary in 1742, and Nazareth Hall for young men was founded in 1743.¹¹⁰ In both of these schools, music was a central part of the curriculum. The instruments studied differed slightly, with the boys learning woodwinds and strings such as violin, and the girls playing harp and guitar; other instruments such as piano, organ, and voice were taught in both schools.¹¹¹ Indeed, the receipts for the Seminary in the years from 1840 to 1859 indicate that they had nearly forty square pianos, and that David Malthaner came often to tune them and replace broken strings.¹¹² The schools would put on concerts known as “Musical Entertainments,” and in 1860, the Seminary is credited with performing Haydn’s Creation.¹¹³ Nazareth Hall also performed bits of this work in 1853.¹¹⁴ These students were being trained to participate in large choral-orchestral works and would thus be ready when the time was right for the St. John Passion. While they may or may not have gone on to play their instruments in the Collegium Musicum, they could certainly have become active members of the church choir, and perhaps formed the core of an ensemble that would present numerous choral-orchestral works to Bethlehem, such as Haydn’s Creation.

The *Creation* was at the height of popularity in Europe and remains popular to this day; the 1811 performance in Bethlehem set a precedent for American first performances of popular European works in Bethlehem. The *St. John Passion* was not an anomaly in this regard. Other works by Haydn had been performed, especially the symphonies, cantatas had been performed in the church, and the community members of Bethlehem had been singing since the founding of the settlement in 1744, and before that in Herrnhut, Germany—for as long as there had been Moravians, they had been singing. Richard Claypool and Robert Steelman write that other large-scale choral-orchestral works “were known and probably performed by the brethren in Bethlehem before 1790 when Nitschmann died,” and Nitschmann himself had copied the parts for many of these.\(^{115}\) Even if unperformed, the collegium studied many works. Timothy Horsfield, a prominent community member, participated in the collegium and kept personal journals; in an entry from January of 1791, he wrote: “In our musical Colegii [sic] we recently played three times completely through Handel’s *Messiah* to our satisfaction and especially for our instruction. We needed very long evenings each time for this practice, however.”\(^ {116}\) The *Creation* premiere was the first time that the instruments, voices, and sheet music came together to actually perform, even if only in part, a work of this magnitude that would become part of the European and American canon up to the twenty-first century.

The Bethlehem *Creation* performance also served other communities’ musical endeavors and connecting Bethlehem with other American musical endeavors. Although there were apparently no trombones used in the Bethlehem premiere, they were likely in attendance at the performance; those instrumentalists joined the Collegium Musicum shortly thereafter and played in the 1823 *Creation* performance. When the Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia decided to

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perform the work in 1821, they borrowed three of the trombone players from Bethlehem. They eventually realized that they would have to borrow the music from the Moravians as well, so Peter’s copies were once again put to good use.\textsuperscript{117} According to Stewart Carter, the Philadelphia musicians were skeptical of these small-town trombonists, and when a mistake in rhythm occurred, the conductor immediately blamed the trombones, having them repeat the passage several times. Eventually the conductor realized that the fault was, in actuality, his own!\textsuperscript{118} Thus the Moravians proved their helpfulness, usefulness, and musical capabilities to the surrounding areas; they would later form more musical connections through their inquiries to the Handel and Haydn Society in 1888 about the \textit{St. John Passion} premiere.

From Bethlehem’s earliest years, it was being shaped and formed into a place that would support the presentation of large musical works, such as performing the American premiere of Haydn’s \textit{Creation} and later J. S. Bach’s \textit{St. John Passion}. Other large choral-orchestral works had been performed in the community before this, but the Haydn premiere was probably the first one for which Bethlehem would be remembered, given its continued popularity to the present day. Haydn became an admired composer in both Europe and America, and the fact that the Moravians performed this work so early in both its and their history meant that they, like places like New York and Philadelphia, were actually on the cutting edge of musical taste and performance in that time. This trend would continue through the years, with more and more premieres of European choral-orchestral works given by the Bethlehem Choral Union and later the Bethlehem Bach Choir.

This history, and the landmark performance of \textit{Creation}, set the stage for Bethlehem’s continued excellence and prominence in the performance of such works. A grand-student of John

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{117} Norton, “Haydn in America (Before 1820),” 328; some sources note that this performance was in 1822.
\item \textsuperscript{118} Stewart Carter, “Early Performances of Haydn’s Creation in America: The Moravian Connection.”
\end{footnotes}
Frederick Peter, John Frederick Wolle, would champion the works of another famous German, Johann Sebastian Bach. Without the background of preparation and performance of works such as Haydn’s *Creation*, it is much less likely that the community would have been prepared to perform or hear works by Bach. The continuous music-making of the community from its conception, and its continued growth from simple hymns with musical accompaniment, to more complicated endeavors such as string quartets, Harmoniemusik, and choral-orchestral works, created an environment of constantly playing, constantly growing, and constantly seeking new musical challenges. These challenges would be presented first by the *St. John Passion*, which was given its American premiere by the Bethlehem Choral Union in 1888, and later by the *B Minor Mass*, subsequently given its American premiere by the Bethlehem Bach Choir in 1900.119

**Boston, Massachusetts**

Like Bethlehem, Boston also had a rich musical history. And, like Bethlehem, from its earliest years, this hub of early American cultural life was highly influenced by imported music from Europe. English and American prints of Playford’s *Dancing Master* were very popular, ballad hawkers on the street sold the latest broadsides and tunes for the community to purchase and enjoy, and military music rang in the streets. Instrumental music filled Boston’s homes, coffee shops, and concert halls, and as time progressed, organ music graced many of its churches. Psalms and hymns in various churches also played a vital role in the changing musical soundscape of Boston as reformers like William Billings attempted to raise the standard of choral singing through singing schools. All of this, along with the founding of the Handel and Haydn Society itself, prepared Boston to produce and receive the *St. Matthew Passion*.

Like Bethlehem, Boston’s religious groups helped shape the music of both worship and everyday life. Boston was filled with religious congregations such as Quakers, Anglicans, Baptists, and Congregationalists, some of which were against music in churches; thus church music was not always the most up-to-date in terms of style and accompaniment. The city maintained a vibrant secular musical life, however, including dancing. This drew a number of furrowed older brows and a bit of consternation, but mainly because of the raucous activities that tended to accompany public dancing such as drinking and brawling. This led Increase Mather to write *An Arrow Against Profane and Promiscuous Dancing Drawn out of the Quiver of the Scriptures*. Dancing became relegated to specific places and times. Joy Van Cleef and Kate van Winkle Keller address this common misunderstanding: “New Englanders in general saw nothing objectionable in the highly structured country dances such as those in the Playford collections. If they were properly taught and performed, these dances were approved and enjoyed by respectable New Englanders.”

What types of music were used for these dances and other social gatherings? Similarly to Bethlehem, there were a number of good instrument collections available in Boston by the 1740s. Barbara Lambert reports that between the years 1630 and c. 1730, “80 instruments were located in Suffolk County, 24 instruments were located in Middlesex County, 4 instruments were located in Essex County (for the period 1635 to 1681) . . . ” Combined with other statistics, there were at least one hundred and fifty-eight instruments in the Massachusetts Bay colony during

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these years. There were lutes, guitars, gitterns, citterns, virginals, harpsichords, spinets, an organ, violas da gamba, drums, trumpets, horns, flutes, fifes, a curtal, jew’s harps, and a dulcimer.\textsuperscript{124} These instruments were used socially, for military purposes, in the home, and perhaps, in a few cases, in churches.

One difference between the musical lives of Bethlehem and Boston is that Boston was a major center for the war effort during the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. This meant that military music was a vital part of the soundscape, while Bethlehem appears to have avoided influence by these sounds. The British soldiers stationed in Boston brought along their own military bands and musical selections, much to the consternation of the colonists. The British even played for the changing of their guards on the Sabbath; the drums, fifes, and other sounds of British invasion disturbed the pious colonists during their worship. Interestingly, when the British bands would play, rather than specifically the military drums and fifes, the colonists were more welcoming, perhaps eager to hear what a country with a longer musical history was able to create musically.\textsuperscript{125}

The Bostonians, however, were not to be outdone. They struck back not just with military music, but with song. There were songs to ridicule the enemy, songs to appeal to patriots, and songs about specific events such as the Boston Tea Party.\textsuperscript{126} Indeed, there are over three hundred songs about the rebellion that are still extant today.\textsuperscript{127} Boston’s first militia company, the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts, was established in 1637. A man named


\textsuperscript{127} Schraeder, "Songs to Cultivate the Sensations of Freedom," 105.
Arthur Perry became their drummer in 1638, and not only did he serve the militia, but Raoul Francois Camus tells us that as the first recorded town drummer, he “called the people to their meeting-house for worship on Sundays and to lectures on Thursdays, proclaimed laws, gave notices of town meetings, auction sales, and the departure of vessels, advertised rooms for rent, children lost and found, and new importations of dry and other goods.”\(^\text{128}\) The Boston colonists also used viols, oboes, and brass instruments, with French horns appearing much later.\(^\text{129}\) Music brought this community together against the enemy, and thus the very foundations of Boston rang with song.

This spirit of communal music continued to be important in Boston’s churches, homes, and civic spaces, just as song was an important part of everyday life in Bethlehem; this would lead to large public performances involving hundreds of singers in concert performances. While the members of Bethlehem tended towards hymns, compositions from community members, and European works, early examples of singing in the Boston colony came in the form of broadside ballads.\(^\text{130}\) Carlton Sprague Smith informs us that these were “circulated in newspapers, chapbooks, songsters, commonplace books, and manuscripts. They were even pasted onto the walls of public houses, as we learn from Izaak Walton’s *The Compleat Angler*.\(^\text{131}\) Once these sheets of simple pieces were available, the common people leapt at the chance to have new songs to sing. Sold on the street by “ballad hawkers,” they were used for fun, social entertainment, and to teach children in the home. Even Benjamin Franklin participated: he composed ballads at the

\(^{128}\) Camus, "Military Music of Colonial Boston," 75–76.
\(^{130}\) The majority of these contained only text with a note about which popular tune was most appropriate to pair with the words.
young age of thirteen or fourteen, and one was published in 1719! The earliest broadside in the colonies of which we have record was dated December 28, 1685. These songs covered such topics as the struggles of settling a new nation, piracy, fights with Indians, frustration with the Crown, crime, humor, love, religion, and more. Songsters, which Smith defines as “a collection of three or more secular poems intended to be sung,” were another popular way to learn new songs, and there were at least two hundred and nine songsters issued in America before 1801.

Some pushback occurred against broadsides, and songsters may also have fallen under this category, as pious people such as Cotton Mather encouraged the community to use Isaac Watts’ hymns and other religious songs rather than secular ones. Mather would likely have enjoyed the Bethlehem soundscape during this time, and he would have been pleased by at least the content of the works the later Singing Societies would perform. Nevertheless, these popular genres of music continued; this fact, combined with church music problems, inspired people such as Thomas Walters to create the “Society for promoting Regular and Good Singing and for reforming the Depravations and Debasements our Psalmody Labours under.”

What exactly was the problem with psalmody? In the early years, many people were unable to read music. This led to a practice known as “lining-out.” The minister, or some congregation member with fairly extensive hymn knowledge, would lead the congregation, singing one line of the psalm at a time. The congregation would then repeat that line. Often this involved large amounts of ornamentation, as the leader would tire of singing the same thing over

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135 Smith, “Broadsides and Their Music in Colonial America,” 162.
and over again. The congregation, in turn, might also decide to ornament things, especially if they were familiar with the tune themselves. The number of participants, combined with the fact that many of them were not entirely sure of themselves, often caused the tempo to drag. Along with the individualized ornaments, the lack of general musical knowledge of most of the congregations resulted in a somewhat displeasing sound.

Many ministers began to complain about this dilemma, and to insist their congregations learn the proper way to sing. The earliest tract published toward this end was Thomas Semmes’ *The Reasonableness of Regular Singing, or Singing by Note. In an Essay to Revive the True and Ancient Mode of Singing Psalm-Tunes...*the Knowledge and Practice of Which is *Greatly decayed in Most Congregations* published in Boston in 1720. Michael Broyles pinpoints the “beginning of the first concerted effort to reform psalmody,” however, to Cotton Mather’s 1721 treatise, *The Accomplished Singer. Instructions first, How the Piety of Singing with a True Devotion may be Obtained and Expressed; the Glorious God after an Uncommon Manner Glorified in it, and His People Edified. And then, How the Melody of Regular Singing, and the Skill of Doing it, according to the Rules of it, May be easily Arrived unto.* According to Broyles, “Between 1721 and 1725 a flood of sermons, pamphlets, and tracts appeared defending regular singing and denouncing the old way.” This led to a divide between the “old way of singing,” and the “new way,” which involved reading music. While there is some

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137 For more information, see Nicholas Temperley, “The Old Way of Singing” *The Musical Times* 120, no. 1641 (Nov. 1879): 943–947. I also used information gleaned from lectures by Dr. Charles Brewer in his Music in the United States I course in the Fall semester of 2016.
141 For more information, see Nicholas Temperley, “The Old Way of Singing” *The Musical Times* 120, no. 1641 (Nov. 1879): 943-947. I also used information gleaned from lectures by Dr. Charles Brewer in his Music in the United States I class in the Fall semester of 2016.
documentation of “lining out” in Bethlehem, there is less description of these problems there.\textsuperscript{142}

The Bethlehem Choral Union would later view improving singing as one of its goals, however, which leads to the conclusion that both Bethlehem and Boston suffered from forms of poor singing habits.

Eventually the “new way” became the most prevalent, as can be seen in many church traditions today. It took a mighty effort and a great deal of trouble to get there, however. The people could not simply learn to read music because their ministers decided that was the proper procedure. Singing Schools began to be established, and these quickly became popular for the knowledge learned, the social aspect of gathering together to sing, and the marital prospects presented to young people.\textsuperscript{143}

One of the most famous of the Singing School masters was William Billings. He, like Pyrlaeus, Peter, and Michael in Bethlehem, would introduce better musical practices to the Boston community. The son of a tradesman, he became a tanner, but grew up in a Bostonian culture where singing masters encouraged music amongst all the common folk. He became a leader of singing schools himself, earning the nickname “the musical tanner.”\textsuperscript{144}

His first publication, which appeared in 1770, was the \textit{The New-England Psalm Singer}, though he would later apologize for mistakes and misprints therein.\textsuperscript{145} This led to his second compilation of tunes; the \textit{Singing-Master’s Assistant} was published in 1778.\textsuperscript{146} He continued to write for Singing Schools, contributing to the popular “fuging tune” repertoire, and more than three hundred of his

\textsuperscript{142} Martin, \textit{Historical Sketch of Bethlehem in Pennsylvania, with Some Account of the Moravian Church}, 55. http://hdl.handle.net/2027/coo1.ark:/13960/t6k08905w.
\textsuperscript{143} Charles Brewer, Lectures, Music in the United States I Course, Fall 2016.
\textsuperscript{146} Schrader, “‘Wilks,’ No. 45,’ and Mr. Billings,” 426.
tunes survive to this day. While these were not fugues in the traditional classical sense, they did encourage the singers to practice imitative style, which would pave the way for the counterpoint of J. S. Bach. Billings spent his life doing all the things he loved, though more or less successfully at different points. Mark Fonder writes that, in spite of being described as a tanner in the probate records, “For a short period during his lifetime, William Billings was the city’s most celebrated composer. Included in the first city directory of Boston (1789) was Wm. Billings–Musician, not tanner, residing on Newbury Street, a block south running parallel with the Commons.”

Even before the advent of Singing Schools, concerts had become an important musical outlet in the early American culture. The Boston Gazette advertised the first public concert in the North American Colonies in the weeks of February 3 and 10, 1729, twenty-one years earlier than the first documentable concert in Bethlehem. Broyles notes that “most concerts consisted of various combinations of vocal and instrumental secular music, often followed by a dance. Military ensembles frequently took part” (sometimes because the concerts served as benefits for the regiment). Operas, such as The Beggar’s Opera, could also be included as concerts, and locations included coffee houses as well as more formal halls. There was no specific schedule, with public concerts being given sporadically from around 1731 to 1760; subscription concerts did not officially began until 1761. The repertoire often included music by Handel, especially Messiah, and sometimes anthems by Billings.

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150 Broyles, Music of the Highest Class, 99.
151 Broyles Music of the Highest Class, 98–100.
William Selby (1738–1798) was an important individual contributor to Boston’s concert life. He and his family moved from London to Rhode Island in 1773, where he had received an offer to serve as organist at Trinity (Anglican) Church in Newport.\textsuperscript{152} Between 1776 and 1777 he relocated again to serve as organist at Trinity Church, Boston.\textsuperscript{153} As a conductor and performer, Selby’s career took off on January 10, 1786, at Stone Chapel; this lasted until June 20, 1793. According to David McKay, Selby’s programs combined vocal and instrumental music, featuring English composers along with “some of Europe’s most distinguished composers: Johann Christian Bach, Corelli, and most important of all, Handel.”\textsuperscript{154} Indeed, Handel was extremely important to Selby, who consistently programmed his music and introduced the organ concertos to the American public. Selby introduced a higher level of performance and excellence of concert, especially of Handel’s works.\textsuperscript{155} McKay remarks that “unquestionably he gave his Boston contemporaries performances on a level unequaled by any previously heard in America.”\textsuperscript{156}

John Knowles Paine (1839–1906) was another organist who played an eminent role in both the musical life of Boston and in importing J. S. Bach’s music to the American masses, though his musical debut occurred over seventy years after Selby’s career blossomed. Like many American musicians of the time, he studied in Europe and transported musical knowledge gained

\textsuperscript{152} Nicholas Temperley, \textit{Bound for America: Three British Composers} (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 13–21. William’s brother, John Selby was also an organist in Boston, serving at King’s Chapel beginning in 1771 and performing at the Concert Hall during the years 1771–1775. These accomplishments have been previously attributed to William Selby, but Nicholas Temperley demonstrates that while both brothers were active in Boston, previous historical research has misappropriated their roles.

\textsuperscript{153} Temperly, \textit{Bound for America: Three British Composers}, 22.


\textsuperscript{155} Temperley points out that both Selby’s “sacred concerts” that contained sacred music outside a liturgical context, and “service concerts” that included liturgical content justify Oscar Sonneck’s “claims for Selby as the remote progenitor of the Handel and Haydn Society” (Temperley 27). Indeed, the H&H would later perform concerts similar in style and structure to these early performances by Selby, though he had no part in the founding of the H&H; his concerts simply helped introduce the listeners of Boston to this type of musical event.

back to the United States. Moravians such as Pyrlaeus, Peter, and Michael are the Bethlehem counterparts to this phenomenon, though they began their lives in Europe rather than travelling there. Paine was the grandson of an organ builder.  

He began studying and composing music while in school, playing his first concert at age eighteen for a presentation of Handel’s *Messiah,* and in 1858 performed a series of three subscription organ concerts to subsidize a trip to Europe for organ study.  

He journeyed to study under Carl August Haupt, performing as a virtuoso in Berlin before his return home. Haupt taught Paine many works of Bach during their lessons, and when Paine returned to America, he in turn began introducing as many pieces by Bach as he was able.  

He was a vital influence on the building of the great organ for the Boston Music Hall, and played a recital on November 2, 1863 to dedicate it. He performed Bach’s “Grand Toccata in F” (likely BWV 540), and the “Trio Sonata in E flat” (BWV 525), while his student Eugene Thayer played “A Grand Fugue in G minor” (probably BWV 542, 578, or 535). In a recital three days later, he performed the Prelude and Fugue in A Minor (BWV 543 or 551) and “Choral Varied; ‘Christ the Lord to Jordan Came,’” which was most likely the two versions of *Christ, unser Herr, zum Jordan kam,* BWV 684 and 685 from Part III of the *Clavierübung.*

George W. Morgan, most likely the first organist to perform Bach in Boston, played “Fugue in D Major” (BWV 580 or 532/2).

As both a performer and a teacher, Paine brought many of Bach’s works to the American public. He was an instructor at Harvard, and in 1865 he began to lead his students in performances of Bach cantatas; if Bethlehem musicians did not perform *Ein Feste Burg* around

159 Howe, "John Knowles Paine," 259.
160 Owen, “Bach Comes to America,” 8.
163 Owen, “Bach Comes to America,” 8–9.
1824, then Paine led its American premiere during Harvard’s commencement exercises. In 1861, John S. Dwight wrote that Paine was “‘our chief exponent, practically, of the great organ music of Bach.’” Along with all this, Broyles remarks that “Paine is credited with introducing the contrapuntal style into Boston.” Paine gave a series of subscription concerts to later repair the organ, and gave a series of public lectures on music history. In all this, Paine was giving of himself to Boston; how could his love of Bach not touch the hearts of those who listened to him play and speak? By continually programming works of Bach, Paine contributed this unfamiliar, contrapuntal style to the Boston soundscape. This laid groundwork for the more grandiose works of Bach, starting with organ, moving to cantata, and eventually, though not through Paine specifically, to the Passions.

Musical societies such as the Handel and Haydn Society were another major factor in bringing European musical traditions to their communities. Their use of the humble fuging tune, so popular in Singing Schools, would prepare singers for the works of J. S. Bach. While Boston’s most famous society would be the Handel and Haydn Society, there were many others that preceded it in various parts of the country. Other societies included the Franklin Musical Society, the Lock Hospital Musical Society, the Norfolk Musical Society, the Essex Musical Society, the Lockhart Singing Society, at Andover, the St. Cecilia Society, the Boston Musical Association, the Stoughton Musical Society, and the Massachusetts Musical Society. The Philharmonic Society of Bethlehem may be added to this list, though it was organized five years after the

164 Owen, “Bach Comes to America,” 12.
Handel and Haydn Society. Many churches also had societies, and the Handel and Haydn Society drew from surrounding church choirs for its membership.\textsuperscript{168}

In H. Earle Johnson’s book, \textit{Hallelujah, Amen! The Story of the Handel and Haydn Society}, he describes differences between the St. Cecilia Society and the Stoughton Musical Society. While Stoughton was founded in 1786, with its constitution published in 1802, it was specifically a singing society focusing on early American music; the St. Cecilia Society was founded in Charleston, South Carolina in 1762, and was, as Johnson notes, “the oldest musical society inasmuch as it patronized concerts by visiting minstrels, orchestral performance, and very occasionally, choral singing.”\textsuperscript{169} The Massachusetts Musical Society was organized in June 1807 with goals very similar to those of the later Handel and Haydn Society—to promote sacred music and the concept of singing sacred pieces well. This Society dissolved in July of 1810, five years before the founding of the Handel and Haydn Society.\textsuperscript{170} Thus, the Handel and Haydn Society was birthed in a culture that had a concept of musical societies and concerts. The H&H also had more specific goals in mind from its very conception as an oratorio ensemble. Johnson writes that “the Handel and Haydn Society rests secure in its status as America’s oldest oratorio society,” while nearly all of the aforementioned societies have ended over time.\textsuperscript{171}

Founded in 1815, the Handel and Haydn Society’s goal was, like many of these other organizations discussed, to further the cause of good singing of church music.\textsuperscript{172} The Society’s history will be discussed in great detail in the following chapter, but it is important to note that

\textsuperscript{168} Broyles, \textit{Music of the Highest Class}, 138.
\textsuperscript{170} Broyles, \textit{Music of the Highest Class}, 139.
\textsuperscript{171} Johnson, \textit{Hallelujah, Amen!}, 17.
H&H itself was an integral part of Boston’s musical culture from its very beginning, and each work it performed laid foundation stones upon which a Bach choral tradition would be built.

In conclusion, both Bethlehem and Boston had thriving musical cultures long before the idea of performing Bach’s works inspired conductors such as Zerrahn and Wolle. Both communities intended to better their singing, both were highly interested in instrumental music, and both jumped at the chance to learn and perform works by European composers such as Handel and Haydn—popular composers whose works had content suitable for communities who wanted to improve their church singing specifically. Works such as *Creation* were used as stepping-stones for both Bethlehem and Boston, with only little bits of Bach, if any at all, performed for quite some time. The *Passions* were the first major Bach pieces, aside from organ works or the possibility of the *Ein Feste Burg* cantata in Bethlehem, performed in either place. Bethlehem’s roots were forever entangled in the sacredness of the Moravian tradition, and even though Boston was moving away from the tradition of psalmody, hymns and other sacred works continued to ring throughout the city on the Sabbath, in the home, in Singing School contexts, and in the concerts of the Handel and Haydn Society in the late nineteenth century. These places were fertile ground for the music of Bach, which would fit the general desire of Bethlehem and Boston singers for sacred choral music, and provide a challenging repertory for local singers. The Handel and Haydn Society and the Bethlehem Choral Union were set to face these challenges with help from their esteemed conductors, Carl Zerrahn and John Frederick Wolle, as will be discussed in the following chapter.
Throughout the nineteenth century, the musical culture of the United States was slowly changing. The soundscapes of eastern cities such as New York and Philadelphia reverberated with both psalms and symphonies. The music of J. S. Bach was also becoming more popular as performances of European art music became more prominent and important in American cultural life. In Boston, Massachusetts, and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, where community members had long funded and advocated for the performance of European classical music, performances of Bach’s keyboard, chamber music, and cantatas were commonly featured on concert programs by the late nineteenth century. Even performances of Bach’s larger choral-orchestral works would become increasingly common, thanks to the advocacy of two particular ensembles: the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston and the Bethlehem Choral Union. The histories of these two ensembles and their respective conductors will shed light on the historical importance of these Passion premieres.

Both the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston and the Bethlehem Choral Union were formed in order to raise the level of singing, and especially the singing of sacred music, in their communities. As discussed in the previous chapter, the quality of church congregational singing in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America was a contentious and highly debated topic. Such debates had spurred the development of “Singing Schools” in communities across the country to help Americans learn to sing in a more pleasing way, and this ideal of good singing permeated the musical activities of the H&H and the Bethlehem Choral Union. The singers who

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participated in these ensembles were to be good musical models for their communities, and needed to display dedication to raising the standard of choral singing in local churches. They accomplished this by singing European sacred works that were satisfying musically and uplifting spiritually, by composers whose works were considered staples of the sacred repertoire, such as Handel, Haydn, and Mendelssohn. The conductors of both ensembles, Zerrahn and Wolle, were intrigued by the solid theology and complex harmonies and counterpoint of Bach’s music. Performance of larger works, such as the St. Matthew Passion and the St. John Passion, which required multiple, talented singers and instrumentalists, had the potential to significantly raise the quality of musical culture in Boston and Bethlehem. However, since these works were originally performed during Passion-week services in Bach’s lifetime, both conductors grappled with the idea of performing them in a concert setting.

In Europe, Mendelssohn’s performances of Bach’s music had set a precedent for concert performance. But, in America, the mixed goals of improving singing within Christian congregations and improving the musical culture of the community in general complicated the performance contexts of the American premieres of the St. Matthew Passion and St. John Passion. The majority of singers in the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston and the Bethlehem Choral Union were church choir members, and both ensembles focused on sacred repertory. Both premieres were performed in concert hall settings, but the newspaper advertisements and reviews recognized the sacred elements as crucial to the works. The singers understood the elements of the sacred present in the pieces, and they portrayed these with respect and

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dedication. The concert settings of these performances made audiences of all types feel welcome by virtue of the location. Thus these premieres set the stage for the music of Bach having a place in both the sacred and secular aspects of American society, where it thrives today.

Many books and articles have been written about the history of the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston, but not much has been written about the Bethlehem Choral Union. Often these accounts mention the Choral Union in passing. While some writers focus on one or the other of these premieres, no one has done an in-depth study comparing and contrasting both equally. This chapter will juxtapose the ensembles and conductors, exploring the history of each ensemble, biographical details about the conductors, and how each presented sacred works in secular contexts.

History of the Bethlehem Choral Union

The singers of the Bethlehem Choral Union were aware of the rich musical heritage of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. As discussed in the previous chapter, thanks to the value of the German musical heritage in Bethlehem, and the early founding of a town instrumental ensemble called the Collegium Musicum, the Choral Union was not the first to perform large choral-orchestral works in Bethlehem. Indeed, the Collegium Musicum had performed choral-orchestral works by Haydn, Pergolesi, Graun, and Nitschmann for almost one hundred years before the Choral Union’s performance of the *St. John Passion* in 1888.177

Nevertheless, a young, aspiring conductor named John Frederick Wolle decided to form an ensemble that would specialize in large choral-orchestral works (see figure 3).

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Figure 3: John Frederick Wolle in 1929
Courtesy of the Bethlehem Bach Choir Archives
Bethlehem was lacking a sufficient choral ensemble in the 1880s. The Collegium Musicum had retitled itself as the Philharmonic Society in the early nineteenth century, but the choral section of the ensemble “dwindled away” in the early 1880s, though the orchestra continued. In 1882, nineteen-year-old “Fred” Wolle determined to create a new ensemble to replace the choral half of the Philharmonic Society, and this was the birth of the Bethlehem Choral Union. He was encouraged by members of the community who had hailed his success conducting a girls’ choral ensemble in September of 1882 in a performance of *The Flower Queen* by George Frederick Root and Fanny Crosby. The *Bethlehem Times* even printed such encouragement in its review of that chorus.

The first public concert of the Bethlehem Choral Union was given in the Moravian Parochial Day School, and consisted of J. S. Hatton’s “He that Hath a Pleasant Face,” Henry Smart’s “Cradle Song,” A. J. Caldicott’s “Humpty Dumpty,” and parts one and two of Haydn’s *Creation*. According to Raymond Walters, historian of the Bethlehem Bach Choir, the *Bethlehem Times* gave a wonderful review on 28 March, 1883, applauding Wolle’s conducting and remarking upon how well the chorus was received. By November of 1883, the ensemble had grown to include one hundred and fifty singers in the chorus.

Shortly after this, Fred Wolle took leave of Bethlehem for a time. Funded by his eldest brother, an administrator in the Bethlehem Iron Works, Wolle was given an opportunity to study in Germany, so he travelled to Munich in July of 1884. His father’s cousin, Theodore F. Wolle, became temporary director of the Choral Union in his absence, and continued the

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179 Frances Jane Crosby and George Frederick Root, *Libretto of the Flower Queen; or the Coronation of the Rose*. New York: Mason Brothers, 1852.


tradition of performing works by composers such as Handel, Haydn, and Mendelssohn that had been established by Fred Wolle.\(^{184}\)

Theodore passed away in 1885, leaving the ensemble without a member of the Wolle family as director for a brief period; upon Fred Wolle’s return home after his last year of study in 1885, he directed the ensemble again. Fresh from intensive Bach study, Fred determined to bring the beauty of this music to his ensemble and community, and thus Paul Larson, another historian of the Bethlehem Bach Choir, reports that he “proposed a season of large choral works to prepare the group for Bach. In the fall they presented Mendelssohn’s *Elijah*; on February 7, Handel’s *Messiah*. The season concluded with *The St. John Passion* . . . with volunteer singers, soloists, and orchestra.”\(^{185}\)

As conductor of the Choral Union, it was fortunate that Fred Wolle had come from a musical and theological background. Born in the Moravian Seminary for Girls on 4 April, 1863, where his father was principal, Fred began studying piano with his sister at a young age.\(^{186}\) Several relatives were involved in the Philharmonic Society, including his uncle Theodore, who was the first violinist. Timothy and Jedidiah Weiss, who were relatives on his mother’s side, played bassoon, trombone, and sang arias.\(^{187}\) Fred Wolle was thus exposed to different types of music early in his life. According to his obituary, he was seven when he began piano lessons with his sister, but began to play organ as soon as one was installed in the seminary chapel in 1869 and abandoned his piano studies.\(^{188}\) He became a regular organ substitute for his sister at

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\(^{188}\) Associated Press, “Dr. J. Fred Wolle Dead; Founder of Bach Choir,” *New York Herald Tribune*, January 13, 1933, Box 5.002, J. Fred Wolle; Letters; Documents; Photos; Books; Wolle Box 1, Folder D 62, Bethlehem Bach Choir Archives.
chapel services soon thereafter. He later became the official organist, and also studied music at the Parochial Day School. W. Ross Yates informs us that “by the time he completed his high school studies he played wind instruments, strings, organ and piano and could take part as needed in the Trombone Choir, play viola in the church orchestra and was always willing to play the organ.”

His professional musical career involved teaching, playing the organ at Trinity Episcopal Church from 1881 to 1884, becoming the organist of the Moravian Church from 1885 to 1905, serving as organist of Packer Memorial Church at Lehigh University from 1887 to 1905, and becoming the chair of music at the University of California, Berkeley in 1905. He organized the Bethlehem Choral Union in 1882, the Bethlehem Bach Choir in 1898, and gave organ concerts throughout his life, including at such prestigious events as the Worlds’ Fair in Chicago in 1893. He also organized festivals celebrating Bach’s music for the Bach Choir. Wolle’s described himself in sketches for an unfinished autobiography as an un-mathematical, spider-loving teacher and organist. Fred claims to have never had an organ lesson until he was “past twenty.” Perhaps he meant official lessons, as he had been playing organ for quite some time by this point. In his autobiography, he states that his first acquaintance with Bach was not made until he was twenty-one. Wolle had possibly never heard the music of Bach until his trip to Germany, but he was certainly acquainted with the biography of the man himself. Sister Caroline Brown was the head music teacher at the Seminary, and taught singing, piano, and conducted the choirs during Wolle’s education. She loaned young Wolle sections of Grove’s *Dictionary of Music*, and Fred

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190 “A Statement Taken from the Pennsylvania Encyclopedia of Biography – Jordan,” p. 1–3 Box 5.002, J. Fred Wolle; Letters; Documents; Photos; Books; Wolle Box 1, Folder D 62, Bethlehem Bach Choir Archives.
191 “Autobiography,” p. 1. Box 5.002, J. Fred Wolle; Letters; Documents; Photos; Books; Wolle Box 1, Folder D 62, Bethlehem Bach Choir Archives.
remembers: “I began to read through the A’s and then the B’s and then the name of Bach held my attention. I read that Bach had composed the Passion music. Not only were the Biblical stories the same as I had heard in my own church every Holy Week, but chorales, I found, were introduced throughout the Passion music which were the same I had been hearing in the Moravian Church.”

Even at this young age, Wolle recognized the connections to the sacred in the Bach Passions, and these connections would resurface later when he worked with the Choral Union on the St. John Passion. After discovering Bach in the dictionary, Wolle attempted to explore his music; he expressed frustration with only finding sheet music by composers such as Mozart and Haydn in the church attic’s manuscript collection; this was not an uncommon dilemma, as Bach had not yet risen to popularity in the United States. Little did young Wolle know that he would play a key role in this country’s eventual love of Bach, and especially of the Passions and large works of which he read in Grove’s Dictionary.

It is possible that he attended a performance of Bach’s organ works when he was ten years old, since a “Grand Organ Concert” was given in Central Moravian Church to introduce the new organ that Wolle’s cousin Theodore had designed. David Wood performed the “Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor,” BWV 582, and G. W. Morgan played the “Toccata and Fugue in D Minor,” BWV 565. There is no documentation of Wolle attending this concert, but it is likely that he did so, especially given the family connection with the organ. He would later study organ with Wood for a brief period, and Wood in turn attended the American premiere of the B Minor Mass given by Wolle and the Bach Choir in 1900. Wolle’s love for Bach would

192 Larson, An American Musical Dynasty, 176.
194 Larson, Bach for One Hundred Years, 5.
195 Larson, Bach for One Hundred Years, 9.
continue throughout his life, as expressed in a letter he wrote to Lillian Kimbell Morse, Director of Music at Westbrook Seminary in Portland, Maine: “Bach’s music has always appealed most strongly to me, probably because many of his works are based on the Church Chorales, the same melodies on which I was raised, and partly because he was an organist, and the organ appeals strongly to me.”

As has been discussed earlier in this chapter, Wolle travelled to Munich in July of 1884 to study organ with Joseph Rheinberger, who only accepted four organ students each year. Wolle was accepted after what Larson describes as a “rigorous examination.” Wolle requested to study only Bach, though he and Rheinberger disagreed about how Bach’s music should be interpreted. Wolle wanted to coax human expression out of the organ, while Rheinberger was more interested in following the exact instructions on the manuscript without much personal interpretation. This was no doubt connected to Wolle’s deep love for the music of Bach and would carry over into his efforts as a Bach conductor with the Choral Union and the later Bach Choir.

While in Munich, Wolle’s uncle, Theodore, passed away. Fred decided to finish out that year’s studies before returning to Bethlehem to take his uncle’s place as organist of Central Moravian Church. On 5 June, 1885, Wolle attended a concert given by the Munich Opera, and it was there that he heard Bach’s St. John Passion for the first time. Paul Larson recounts Wolle’s reaction: “The music stunned him. Though overall he did not care for the performance by the singers of the Munich Opera, his best expression of the effect the Passion music had on him was a quote from Keats: Then felt I like some watcher of the skies, /When a new planet swims into his

196 Letter to Lillian Kimbell Morse from Fred Wolle, March 9, 1912, Box 5.002, J. Fred Wolle; Letters; Documents; Photos; Books; Wolle Box 1, Folder D 62, Bethlehem Bach Choir Archives.
197 Larson, Bach for One Hundred Years, 10.
198 Larson, Bach for One Hundred Years, 10.
He determined to perform this work with the Choral Union as soon as possible, and indeed, exactly three years later to the day, the Choral Union presented the first American performance of the entire *St. John Passion* on 5 June, 1888.\textsuperscript{200}

**History of the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston**

In addition to examining the history of the Bethlehem Choral Union, it is also important to examine the history of the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston. The H&H was a much older ensemble when they began their Bach *Passion* journey, which would, in terms of rehearsal, begin in 1870 and culminate in the full American premiere of the *St. Matthew Passion* in 1879. The ensemble itself was birthed in 1815 with the goal of promoting good singing in America. In Teresa Neff and Jan Swafford’s two-hundred year celebratory compilation of Handel and Haydn Society history, they recount that “throughout its history, the idea of old and new never left the Society’s mission. Beginning in 1815, in choosing its namesake composers Handel, representing older music, and Haydn, newer, to its twentieth-century practice of programming and commissioning new music to be performed alongside that of the eighteenth century, H&H has never forgotten its heritage, while maintaining a balance—an evolving balance—in its focus.”\textsuperscript{201}

Beginning with forty-four members, the Society was originally comprised of middle-class, amateur musicians, most of whom were veterans of local church choirs. Due to the type of musicians that made up this Society, the goals “were as much pleasure and self-improvement as

\textsuperscript{199} Larson, *Bach for One Hundred Years*, 10.

\textsuperscript{200} “Bach’s ‘Passion’: The First Rendition of this Masterpiece in America Given by the Bethlehem Choral Union,” *Bethlehem Globe-Times* XXIL no. 106 (June 6, 1888): p. 1, col. 7. There were articles about Bach and the *Passion* music, references to the concert, and/or ads printed in the *Times* every day leading up to the concert (May 28–June 4), but no ad or article the day of the concert. This concert review was printed on June 6.

\textsuperscript{201} Teresa Neff and Jan Swafford, “Introduction,” in *The Handel and Haydn Society: Bringing Music to Life for 200 Years*, (Boston, Massachusetts: Handel and Haydn Society, David R. Godine, Publisher, 2014), 1.
performance,” according to Jan Swafford. The H&H was essentially comprised of middle-
class men (and a few women as singers, not members), who were mostly unable to read music. 
They would, however, become Boston’s longest lasting oratorio society. They adopted a formal 
constitution by the end of April 1815, after which they began rehearsing; they approved the Act 
of Incorporation on 9 February, 1816 (see figure 4). Here the Senate and House of 
Representatives of the General Court stated, amongst other rules and legalities about meetings, 
officers, and real estate, that the four representatives of the Society “hereby are incorporated and 
made a body politic and corporation for the purpose of extending the knowledge and improving 
the style of performance of Church Music, by the name of the Handel and Haydn Society; and by 
that name they may sue and be sued, have a common seal, and the same at pleasure alter, and be 
etitled to all the powers and privileges incident to the aggregate corporations.”

The first concert was scheduled for 25 December, 1815, just eight months after the 
adoption of the formal constitution. A steadily increasing number of rehearsals were held as the 
date of the first concert drew near; two rehearsals were scheduled for the Saturday and Sunday 
nights before Christmas, and another was added on Monday afternoon. The concert was given at 
King’s Chapel on 25 December, 1815, presenting parts of Haydn’s Creation, Handel’s Messiah, 
as well as numbers from other oratorios.

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205 Perkins and Dwight, History of the Handel and Haydn Society, of Boston, Massachusetts, 42–44.
Figure 4: H&H Act of Incorporation, Approved 9 February, 1816
Re-printed in the Act of Incorporation and By-Laws of the Handel and Haydn Society
with the Trust Deed Creating a Permanent Fund, 1867 Edition
Courtesy of the Handel and Haydn Society Archives
Three years later, on 25 December 1818, this ensemble premiered the entirety of Handel’s *Messiah*, and the following February gave the full premiere of Haydn’s *Creation* (at least a portion of which had previously been performed in Bethlehem, PA, in 1811 by the Collegium Musicum). Swafford writes that the next month, the Society was incorporated by a Special Act of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, “for the purpose of extending the knowledge and improving the style of performance of Church music.” In his chapter of *The Handel and Haydn Society: Bringing Music to Life for 200 Years*, musicologist Michael Broyles points out that the Society began with two goals, to improve the sacred vocal style, which was lacking, and also to spread masterworks throughout America, which was a radical idea in 1815. According to Broyles, they “straddled a position between singing school and public concert organization. The presentation of oratorios was a stated objective. But the presentation itself was only a means to an end, subordinate to the ultimate objective of improving church music.”

The Handel and Haydn Society grew significantly and changed throughout the years, especially as it went through various conductors, presidents, and changes in by-laws. In the first years of the ensemble, women were allowed to sing, but not to hold membership. Indeed, Johnson writes that at their first performance on 25 December, 1815, the singers presented a fascinating picture: “Pressed closely together in the choir at the rear were one hundred singers—ninety men and ten courageous women, an orchestra of twelve, and the organist. Some of the men sang falsetto, taking the soprano and alto parts; there was nothing strange in that.” It took

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207 Swafford, “Two Hundred Years: An Overview,” 17.
several years before women were allowed to comprise the majority of the soprano and alto
sections; Lowell Mason was their saving grace, though they had some arguments with him about
other gender matters. Women were finally allowed membership in 1967, forty-seven years
after women were granted the right to vote in the United States.

An important element of the H&H’s history is their contribution to music education in the
United States. Beginning with their partnership with Lowell Mason and his Boston Handel and
Haydn Collection of Church Music in 1820, the Society became a leader in teaching America to
sing. As has been discussed, part of the Society’s philosophy all along had been to improve the
singing of the communities surrounding it, and it had begun a grass roots approach with
European music. This meant that the Society stressed education, which then caused development
towards educated tastes in both performers and audience, which allowed them to seek out more
sophisticated music. They taught America the works of Handel, Haydn, and a few others,
gradually incorporating more materials, but never completely leaving the popular Messiah and
Creation behind. Indeed, they even performed a set of three concerts to determine which of those

211 Broyles, “Growth, Change, and Discoveries in the Nineteenth Century,” 54.
212 Swafford, “Two Hundred Years: An Overview,” 31; The Society did give some opportunities to women. For the
many oratorios they performed required female soloists, though this practice was not in effect until 1830
(Ledbetter 147). These were sometimes drawn from the choir, and sometimes hired professionally. In Johnson’s
history of the Society, he often branches from the central chronological narrative in order to give biographical
details on many of the soloists and participants. These details and anecdotes are equally dispersed between men and
women, just as the solos in the oratorios were. This provides an interesting insight into the lives of the women
surrounding the Society at that time (Johnson’s book was published in 1981). The Society also hired a female
organist, Sophia Hewitt. She was one of the first female concert pianists in America. (Broyles “Growth, Change, and
Discoveries in the Nineteenth Century” 49). She had studied with prominent teachers of the time, P. K. Moran and
Dr. Jackson, who almost became organist for the Society himself on several occasions (Johnson Hallelujah! Amen
42). Hewitt performed faithfully with the Society for many years, from 1819 to 1830. The Society so revered her
playing that they actually paid her more than her male predecessor, thus she was one of the earliest documented
females in America paid more than a male for the same job. Her devotion to the Society was so great that she even
married the first violinist, Louis Ostinelli. Unfortunately, upon his presidency, Lowell Mason determined that
Sophia was no longer capable of the capacity of organ playing needed, and he decided to hire a German organist,
Charles Zeuner. Members protested, and a seven to five vote of the board gave the job to Zeuner (Broyles “Growth,
Change, and Discoveries in the Nineteenth Century” 50, 54). A later example of the Society’s positive treatment of
women stems from their work with Amy Beach. Not only did they premiere her Mass in E flat, op. 5, on February 7,
1892, they also performed Beethoven’s Choral Fantasy with Beach as the piano soloist (Neff 137).
213 Johnson, Hallelujah, Amen!, 45.
214 Swafford, “Two Hundred Years: An Overview,” 19.
two pieces was better. Rather than comparing the two as whole works, three concerts were given. The first concert presented Part I of *Messiah* on the first half, a few smaller pieces, then Part I of *Creation*. Similarly, the second concert presented Part II of each work, and the third concert Part III of each work!215 More recent endeavors include the Society’s Education Program, begun in 1985, which includes both youth choirs and community efforts.216 The Society also encourages the study and use of early music performance practice. In fact, Neff and Swafford remark that it is “considered America’s oldest performing arts organization in continuous existence and a national leader in both early music performance and education.”217

The number of works this ensemble has premiered in America speaks to its importance in American history; while we are interested in the premiere of the *St. Matthew Passion*, it is important to note that this was not the H&H’s first American premiere, nor anywhere near its last. Not only did the Society give the first full performances of the *Messiah* and the *Creation*, it also premiered Mozart’s Mass in C, Handel’s oratorios *Samson, Solomon, Ode for St. Cecilia’s Day, Jephtha, Joshua, and Belshazzar*, Beethoven’s *Engedi*, Michael Costa’s *Naaman*, J. S. Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion*, Verdi’s *Requiem*, Karl Heinrich Graun’s *Der Tod Jesu*, Max Bruch’s *Arminius*, Theodore Dubois’ *Paradise Lost*, Fritz Volbach’s *Raphael*, Marco Enrico Bossi’s *Paradise Lost*, and Peteris Vasks’ *Dona Nobis Pacem* with the H&H Youth Chorus. Throughout the history of the Society, they have performed a number of Boston premieres and world premieres, including Amy Beach’s *Mass*. The earliest commission of the society was shortly after it was founded; the Society sang F. Granger’s *President Monroe’s March* on 5 July, 1817. Other commissions have included John Knowles Paine’s *The Nativity*, Horatio Parker’s

215 Johnson, *Hallelujah, Amen!*, 30; this appears to have occurred on April 1, 3, and 4 of 1818, though the year is not specifically noted by Johnson.
216 Swafford, “Two Hundred Years: An Overview,” 34.
Morven and the Grail, and Sir John Tavener’s *Lamentations and Praises*. The Education Program has commissioned several works for its youth ensemble, as well.218

Another interesting facet of this institution is its connection to powerful American families, especially in the realm of musical culture. Lowell Mason is certainly well known for his contributions to music education, but he and his family continued on to other beneficial endeavors such as Lowell helping to establish the Boston Academy of Music and pioneering teacher-training conventions. His sons, Daniel and Lowell, established their own publishing firm, producing secular and religious music, school textbooks, histories, English and French dictionaries, and music periodicals including *The New York Musical Gazette*. The younger Lowell and his brother Henry were a vital part of the Mason and Hamlin manufacturing company. Their brother William Mason became a touring pianist and pedagogue, also writing important pedagogical materials.219 Jonas Chickering and his sons were piano manufacturers, creating fine American instruments that furthered the musical growth of the American public. Alfred Dolge writes that theirs were “the first American pianos shown in Europe” at the World’s Fair in London in 1851, “and carried off the highest honors.”220 Not only Jonas Chickering, but all three of his sons served as presidents of the Handel and Haydn Society.221 The Society’s history and connections allow us to follow the threads of events, musical endeavors, and personal contributions to American culture that its members made during and after their time with the Society. It also shows how, once the *St. Matthew Passion* was part of the Society’s rehearsal and performance rotation, it was part of the lives of powerful American families, and thus quickly a central part of American musical culture.

218 Neff and Swafford, *The Handel and Haydn Society*, Appendix 1, 231.
221 Dolge, *Pianos and Their Makers*, 276.
The conductor at the time of the H&H’s Bach Passion journey was a German immigrant named Carl Zerrahn. There had been a wave of German musicians who fled Germany after the 1848 revolution. Many crossed the ocean, as America offered refuge and numerous musical opportunities for European ensembles. Amongst these travelling groups was an ensemble called the “Germania Musical Society.” They performed almost one thousand concerts heard by over one million listeners, and gave a new understanding to Americans of the possibilities of classical music; they brought beautiful German and European symphonic repertoire that perhaps listeners had never heard before. In 1852 they settled in Boston and joined the H&H for some performances; eventually the group broke apart to pursue their own individual careers.

One of the flutists in the group was Carl Zerrahn (see figure 5). At the age of twelve, he studied with Friedrich Weber in Rostock; he later moved to Hanover and then Berlin. It was in Berlin that he joined the Germania Musical Society as a flute player in 1848. Johnson and Newman recount that “during the six years the orchestra toured the United States, he was featured as a virtuoso soloist and occasional composer.”

After the group disbanded, Zerrahn stayed in Boston to become the conductor of the H&H from 1854 to 1895; he was cajoled into returning in 1897 for one final season. During this era the Society was able to afford to pay leading soloists, men no longer sang the soprano and alto parts, and they had enormous numbers of people in the choruses. Zerrahn’s other accomplishments, according to Johnson and Newman, included conducting the Harvard Musical Association Orchestra (1865–1882), the Orchestral Union (1854–68), the Philharmonic (1857–63), the Handel and Haydn Society’s Triennial Festivals for over two decades (see figure 6), the

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225 Swafford, "Two Hundred Years: An Overview," 31–32.
Worcester County Music Association Festivals (1866–97), the Salem Oratorio Society (1868–98), and choruses of over 10,000 and 20,000 in the Peace Jubilees of 1869 and 1872; he served as an educator at the New England Conservatory of Music from 1867–98, teaching singing, harmony, and composition; he also compiled collections for singing societies and composed.\footnote{Johnson and Newman, “Zerrahn, Carl.”}

Zerrahn quickly became beloved by the members of the H&H. In the third volume of the Society’s Scrapbook, he was remembered as the society’s first permanent conductor who was in continuous service in that capacity for a period of no less than forty-two years. There were other directors or conductors before him, but their services were only temporary. During Conductor Zerrahn’s long service, the Society’s ambitious goals of promoting good singing and performing large choral-orchestral works were in large measure realized chiefly through his activities and his inspiring leadership.\footnote{Handel and Haydn Society Archives, Scrapbook, vol. 3, “Carl Zerrahn,” p. 88, Handel and Haydn Society, Boston, Massachusetts.} The third volume of the Handel and Haydn Society Scrapbook has an article detailing the members’ gratitude; the ladies showed their appreciation through gifts such as “an elegant set of cameo studs and sleeve-buttons, with reliefs representing heads of leading musical composers, cut with great beauty and mounted in exquisite taste.”\footnote{Handel and Haydn Society Archives, Scrapbook, vol. 3, p. 43, Handel and Haydn Society, Boston, Massachusetts.}

On May 2, 1879, The H&H celebrated Zerrahn’s twenty-fifth anniversary as their conductor. This was a little less than a month after their full American premiere of the \textit{St. Matthew Passion}, which had formed such a large part of his career. The ensemble presented him with gifts: full orchestral scores for Mendelssohn’s \textit{Elijah, St. Paul,} and \textit{Hymn of Praise} from the ladies, and a gold medallion with the H&H seal, the dates of his twenty-five years as conductor (1854–1879), and an inscription marking the occasion, from the gentlemen.
Figure 5: Carl Zerrahn
H&H Scrapbook 3, p. 39
Article on the Fourth Triennial Festival
Courtesy of the Handel and Haydn Society Archives
The current president, Mr. C. C. Perkins, presented these to Zerrahn and spoke concerning the ensemble’s love and appreciation:

They feel that you have enabled them to gain a deeper appreciation of the beauties of the oratorios which they have studied under your direction; that by your conscientious and judicious criticisms you have taught them to sing the choral works of the great composers in a manner which has not only maintained but greatly increased the reputation of the society of which they are members. Their gratitude to you is in proportion to their pride in the position which it holds among the musical societies of America, to their deep and lasting affection for it, and their earnest wishes for its prosperity and improvement . . . While offering you these presents I feel that I am but expressing the feeling of the donors when I say that they hope that your future career may be as honorable and useful as that which reflects so much credit upon your past life, and that you may long maintain your connection with a society which owes you so much, and would fain owe you more.  

The Society recognized and were grateful for his many contributions, not the least of which was leading them through their long journey with the *St. Matthew Passion.*

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Comparisons and Contrasts

Several comparisons and contrasts may be made between these ensembles. The Handel and Haydn Society had been directed by Carl Zerrahn for twenty-three years at the time of the *St. Matthew* premiere, and had been working on parts of the piece with him for about nine years, performing portions in 1871, 1874, and 1876, before the 1879 full premiere. After working together for such a long time, the members of the chorus would have known his temperament, personality, rehearsal style, and expectations. Together, they had lived with the *St. Matthew Passion* for nine years; this brought a level of comfort and familiarity with the piece, so perhaps the premiere seemed less daunting after so much preparation had occurred. The longevity of the ensemble also affected the number and quality of the singers involved; presumably the H&H was an accomplished ensemble after sixty-four years of existence.

The Bethlehem Choral Union had been singing under Fred Wolle’s baton for about four of its (slightly over) five years of existence at the time of the *St. John Passion* premiere in 1888. These were not four consecutive years, as Wolle had traveled to Germany to study in the middle of that time. While this seems long enough to learn a bit about someone’s personality, rehearsal style, and expectations, it does not always lead to the same bond that longevity brings. The ensemble also had not worked on the *St. John Passion* before their 1887–1888 season, so they had not spent much time with the piece itself, especially as compared to the nine years of rehearsals and small performances of the *St. Matthew Passion* the Handel and Haydn Society had undergone. While certain aspects of the performance practice of the *St. John Passion* were not exactly as the score dictated, such as having someone read the part of the Evangelist, which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter, it would still be a massive undertaking for such a young ensemble.

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230 Larson, *Bach for One Hundred Years*, 11.
It is also important to compare and contrast the careers and backgrounds of Carl Zerrahn and Fred Wolle. Both Carl Zerrahn and Fred Wolle received their musical training in Germany. Zerrahn became individually involved with the H&H, eventually becoming a highly esteemed conductor, leading the group for over forty years consecutively. American-born Wolle grew up in the Moravian community of Bethlehem, PA. As a teenager, he had already gained experience with conducting a young women’s ensemble, and was encouraged to start another group. He founded and led the newly formed Bethlehem Choral Union for almost two years before travelling to Germany for more musical training. Not only did he study organ there, he also was introduced to the *St. John Passion*. After about two years in Germany, he returned home with new purpose. He was determined to teach the chorus the *St. John Passion*. He, too, would go on to lead the ensemble (and its later reincarnation, the Bethlehem Bach Choir) for many years, but at the time of the *St. John* premiere the ensemble was still quite young.

The contrasting ages of the ensembles may also have resulted in differing levels of chorus ability. The H&H would likely have had a more mature sound than the young Bethlehem Choral Union. Presumably, since the H&H had been in existence for about sixty-four years by the time of the full *St. Matthew Passion* premiere, and their efforts to educate the community in better choral singing had been at work for quite some time, their sound would have been slightly more refined than that of their first concert in 1815. Whether it sounded like what a modern day audience would expect from a concertizing group, however, is another question. Having a true German conductor might have raised their level of performance, due to potentially more exacting standards. Working with the *St. Matthew* for nine years would also have contributed to the familiarity with the piece, and therefore the comfort level and knowledge in performance. The Bethlehem Choral Union, however, was still quite young, and the *St. John Passion* premiere was
near the beginning of Wolle’s return from Germany. Nevertheless, the audience seems to have been delighted by the concert, and the Choral Union was able to continue improving and performing.

Since both ensembles were founded to raise the level of sacred choral singing in their communities, they each specialized in sacred music, especially sacred works by composers such as Handel, Haydn, Mendelssohn, and eventually, J. S. Bach. Both ensembles had historical ties to the sacred through their mission statements and membership, and consequently understood and treated the *Passions* as such; though the works were performed in concert settings, reverence for the texts and stories behind them was maintained by ensemble and concert reviewers alike. The way these ensembles performed the works attested to the their views of the inherent sacredness of the *Passions* and their goal to present them in a way that their nineteenth-century American audiences could appreciate, as will be explored in the following chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR
PREMIERES AND PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

Now we reach the pinnacle of our story: the premieres of the Passions themselves.
American audiences were slowly becoming more familiar with works by Bach, especially keyboard works. The musical cultures of Boston and Bethlehem were well equipped to supply singers and audiences for large choral-orchestral works due to the rise of overall better choral singing and greater familiarity with European choral-orchestral works through singing schools and choral societies/uni ons. The two ensembles had spent years learning high-quality choral-orchestral works, the two conductors were cherished by their ensembles, and they appreciated Bach’s music. It seemed that the stage was set for the American premieres of Bach’s St. Matthew and St. John Passions.

Both ensembles also performed the works in ways that suited their performers, capabilities, locations, and audiences. This hearkens back to Mendelssohn’s St. Matthew Passion revival in 1829. In order to bring the work into the nineteenth century, Mendelssohn made cuts and edits to the score and enlarged the ensemble beyond what Bach likely used. These changes will be discussed and compared to similar changes made by the H&H to the St. Matthew Passion and the Bethlehem Choral Union to the St. John Passion in order to understand the ways these ensembles treated Bach’s Passions as adaptable. Date(s) of performance, location, amount of the work performed, size of ensemble, instrumentation, and conducting style (from podium vs. from keyboard instrument) all differed amongst these three ensembles and will be explored in order to understand how each ensemble brought its chosen Passion into its own time and place, and how each maintained a sense of the sacred in the works in spite of all of these performances being concerts rather than church services.
The Handel and Haydn Society spent nine years rehearsing and performing small portions of the *St. Matthew Passion* before they presented the full performance on 11 April, 1879. The piece was difficult; it took time to learn, process, and prepare, especially considering that the Handel and Haydn Society was an active performing ensemble that had to rehearse other works for concerts—they could not just drop everything to concentrate on an unfamiliar piece.

According to archival resources, the H&H planned to have the parts from the Robert Franz edition printed for rehearsal, and ordered these from Oliver Ditson in 1869. They did not actually pay Ditson until 1871, so it is possible that he supplied them the parts before receiving full payment (see figure 7). The Records of the Handel and Haydn Society note that 2 January, 1870 was the first rehearsal of the *Passion Music*, though only about one hundred singers were present due to “a very stormy evening.” The second rehearsal, 9 January, had about three hundred and fifty singers present. Although they planned to perform the Passion on 16 March, 1870, the Board determined that they should substitute *The Creation* “for inability to produce the latter [the *St. Matthew Passion*] adequately in consequence of insufficient orchestra.” They subsequently performed “selections,” in 1871, a slightly longer portion in 1874, again a bit more in 1876, and finally the whole work in 1879.

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232 Perkins and Dwight, eds., *History of the Handel and Haydn Society, of Boston, Massachusetts*, 279, 287, 289; 1871 Oliver Ditson Receipt for Engraving Scores, Handel and Haydn Society Archives, Handel and Haydn Society Financial Records: Receipts and Ledgers, 1818–1984, Box 1, Folder: Receipts 1871, The Handel and Haydn Society, Boston, MA. Dwight records that they ordered the parts in 1868; the only receipt for scores I was able to find was for 1869, and given the large number of scores ordered, I believe there was no previous order and that the true date of the order was 1869.
235 The 1871 and the 1874 performances were given as part of the H&H’s Second and Third Triennial Festivals, respectively.
236 For more information on the process and the specifics of each subsequent performance, see Perkins and Dwight, *History of the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston, Massachusetts*, 279–403.
Figure 7: Oliver Ditson Receipt for Engraving Scores, 1871
Courtesy of the Handel and Haydn Society Archives
The Bethlehem Choral Union performed their *St. John Passion* premiere, which occurred on 5 June, 1888, fairly quickly after Fred Wolle’s return from Germany, but this performance was planned as part of their season—and Wolle’s love for Bach made him determined to see this performance through. He was a talented pedagogue: he preplanned the season in such a way that the ensemble would be prepared for Bach. They began the season with Mendelssohn’s *Elijah*, followed by a performance of Handel’s *Messiah* on 7 February, 1888, then finally performed the *St. John Passion* as the season finale in June.\(^{237}\)

One difference between Bach’s eighteenth-century premieres, the Mendelssohn revival, and the American premieres was venue. J. S. Bach first directed the *St. John Passion* on 7 April, 1724, in Leipzig’s Nikolaikirche and the *St. Matthew Passion* was premiered at the Thomaskirche on 11 April, 1727.\(^{238}\) Since Bach intended these compositions for a specific liturgical date, he would have had no conception of them as concert pieces. Mendelssohn’s revival of the *St. Matthew* in 1829, however, treated it as many works, sacred or secular, were treated in the nineteenth century; he placed it in the secular context of the Singakademie’s concert hall,\(^{239}\) though the ensemble acknowledged its beauty and the sacredness of the text. When describing early rehearsals amongst Mendelssohn’s friends, Eduard Devrient, his fellow revivalist, remarked that “The dramatic treatment that arose from it, the overwhelming majesty of the choruses, above all the wondrous declamation of the part of Christ, were to me a new and sacred Bible-speech, and increased with every time of hearing our reverence and astonishment at the greatness of this work . . . all shared these impressions, and Felix had no reason to complain


\(^{238}\) Markus Rathey, *Bach’s Major Vocal Works: Music, Drama, Liturgy* (Yale University Press, 2016), 77; For information on the copious debate surrounding the dating of the *St. Matthew* performance, as well as information on the traditional date of 1729, see Joshua Rifkin, “The Chronology of Bach’s Saint Matthew Passion,” *The Musical Quarterly* 61, no. 3 (1975): 364.

of our lack of zeal.”

Indeed, Mendelssohn himself remarked upon the sacredness of the work, as remembered by Devrient: “‘And to think,’ said Felix triumphantly, standing still in the middle of the Peron Platz, ‘that it should be an actor and a Jew that gives back to the people the greatest of Christian works.’”

The Handel and Haydn Society performed each subsequent version of the *St. Matthew Passion* in the Boston Music Hall, their regular performance venue. One way that they endeavored to preserve aspects of the sacred was through timing. It was the original intent, nearly from the idea’s conception, that the ensemble would give a full performance on Good Friday, as Bach intended. They wanted to honor his purpose, the internal meaning and story in the piece, and give their listeners a sense of the sacred; Dwight’s reviews of the various performances are full of descriptions of the singers’ treatment of the text and the emotions evoked in the audience. Finally, on 11 April, 1879, the H&H succeeded in performing the entire piece. They performed the first half in the afternoon and the second half in the evening, as Dwight believed Bach had separated the two parts years before in Leipzig in 1727 (see figure 8).

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242 An example of this may be found in Perkins and Dwight, *History of the Handel and Haydn Society, of Boston, Massachusetts*, 312–313.
243 Perkins and Dwight, *History of the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston, Massachusetts*, 341, 403. In the review of the 1874 performance, Dwight remarked that, “To give the whole work in a single performance would be neither practicable nor wise. If it is to be produced entire, it should be divided into two concerts on the same day, as it was originally sung in church, Part I in the morning, and Part II in the evening service” (341). The Passions were, as far as modern scholarship reports, performed in two parts on Good Friday, one part before and one part after the sermon. This means that Part I was in the afternoon, and by the time the sermon had ended, Part II would have occurred in the evening. The congregation would not have had a “break” other than a hymn and the sermon between the two parts, however. For a description of the liturgical order of the 1724 Good Friday service in which the *St. John Passion* was premiered, see Markus Rathey, *Bach’s Major Vocal Works: Music, Drama, Liturgy*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016, 78–80.
Handel and Haydn Society.

BOSTON MUSIC HALL,

GOOD FRIDAY,

APRIL 11, 1879.

FOURTH PERFORMANCE OF BACH’S

PASSION MUSIC

According to Saint Matthew.

FIRST PART, AT 3 O’CLOCK, P. M.
SECOND PART, AT 8 O’CLOCK, P. M.

Miss HENRIETTA BEEBE, Soprano.
Miss EDITH ABELL, Mezzo Soprano.
Mr. W. COURTNEY, Tenor.
Mr. JOHN F. WINCH, Baritone.
Mr. MYRON W. WHITNEY, Bass.

Mr. EDOUARD REMENYI, Solo and Leading Violinist.
Mr. B. J. LANG, Organist.

Mr. H. G. TUCKER, Pianist.

Choir of Boys from BRIMMER, DWIGHT, AND RICE SCHOOLS,
Trained by Mr. J. B. SHARLAND.

Mr. CARL ZERRAHN, Conductor.

April 18 (Easter Sunday). Handel’s Judas Macabeus. Solos by Miss FANSEY KELLOGG, Miss EDITH ABELL, Mr. W. COURTNEY, Mr. M. W. WHITNEY.

Friday, May 2. Mendelssohn’s Elijah. Complimentary Benefit of Mr. CARL ZERRAHN, in commemoration of the completion of his twenty-fifth year as director of the Handel and Haydn Society.

Figure 8: 1879 Bach’s St. Matthew Passion Program, Part I,
Courtesy of the Handel and Haydn Society Archives
The Bethlehem Choral Union was another matter. They faced several difficulties in finding performance venues. They had requested to perform Handel’s *Messiah* in the Moravian Church for Advent early on in the ensemble’s existence. This led to copious debates, as the church leaders did not like the idea of the church being used in a secular way, for a concert with tickets sold and seats designated. In December of 1887, the Church passed the “Resolution of the Board of Elders in reference to the use of the church,” which stated that “After the Friday coming service the Board of Elders met and adopted a preamble and resolution to be read [in] public, restricting the use of our place of worship in future to religious services. . . .” or other meetings of a religious nature. The minutes of the Board of Elders go into more detail about the refusal of the request, and the entire “Preamble and Resolution Regarding the Use of Our Church Edifices” was written in the Minutes of the Board of Elders notebook on Friday, 9 December, 1887, stating in effect that the church was not to be used for secular concerts.²⁴⁴

Thus the Choral Union began exploring other performance venues such as the Moravian Parochial Day School.²⁴⁵ Apparently they were not completely banned from the Moravian Church as long as the performance was not a “concert;” Paul Larson notes that they performed Mendelssohn’s *Elijah* there, and it “was treated as a sacred service.”²⁴⁶ Larson also points out the differences in this “sacred service” and “concerts” given by the Choral Union: for this performance, “no tickets were sold at the door, though there were reserved seats and the audience was ‘respectfully requested to abstain from applause.’”²⁴⁷ After this concert, however, the Choral Union performed the *Messiah* in the Episcopal Church of the Nativity. The organ was

²⁴⁴ Diary of Central Moravian Church, 1872–1887, 49th Week, December 1887, p. 471, BethCongUB 51, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, PA; and Minutes of the Board of Elders of Central Moravian Church, vol. 3, 1864–1896, December 1887, p. 174–176, BethCongUB, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, PA.
apparently pitched quite low, and Larson notes that in addition to this problem, the voicing was “aggravatingly harsh and strident.”\textsuperscript{248} The performance itself was problematic, having accompanist, ensemble, and soloist issues. The final performance of the season, the \textit{St. John Passion} premiere, was given in the Parochial Day School. Perhaps Wolle chose this to avoid the problems with the organ and possibly to give his chorus a more positive atmosphere after such a problematic performance of \textit{Messiah}.\textsuperscript{249}

Another factor was that the rules of the Parochial Day School Hall were not strict about audience behavior and ticketing, as had been the case at the Moravian Church. Larson points out that the performance of the \textit{St. John Passion} was both advertised and conceptualized as a concert rather than a sacred service, and the announcement in \textit{The Moravian} highlighted that this “was to be a community event rather than one involving the church. A number of areas around Bethlehem that included various European ethnic groups and diverse church congregations had come together because of the growth of the population,” and this concert was for everyone.\textsuperscript{250} Wolle conceptualized the \textit{Passion} as a piece that concertgoers of all types should be able to experience, so he made sure that all felt welcome through choice of venue and advertisement. Articles promoting the concert began to appear in the \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times} on May 25, 1888, such as “First Time in This Country,” which inquired as to whether this would be the \textit{St. John Passion}’s American premiere. Other articles about Bach and about the work itself appeared, and the first official advertisement was printed on May 30. These continued every day until 5 June, 1879, the day of the concert (see figure 9).\textsuperscript{251}

\textsuperscript{248} Larson, \textit{Bach for One Hundred Years}, 11.
\textsuperscript{249} Larson, \textit{Bach for a Hundred Years}, 11.
\textsuperscript{250} Larson, \textit{An American Musical Dynasty}, 203–204.
\textsuperscript{251} For all references and advertisements related to the \textit{Passion} premiere in the \textit{Globe-Times}, see \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times} XXII no. 96 – XXII no 106 (May 28, 1888 – June 6, 1888).
Figure 9: Passion Music Ad
Bethlehem Globe-Times XXIL no. 101, May 31, 1888
Courtesy of the Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, PA
This concept of the church not allowing “secular” performances (even though the *St. John Passion* is a sacred piece), and the advertisements highlighting the event as a “concert” give some conception of the nuances of the problem. The *Passions* are sacred works, but were being given as concerts. Did the inherent sacredness of a work change based upon the intent behind the performances? The Choral Union was comprised of Moravians and community members who were likely involved in church choirs; did that contribute to the sacredness of the performance? Conversely, is it possible that the inherent sacredness of the works could actually transform the performances themselves into something sacred? It seems possible that a work of this magnitude, with such specific theology and beautiful music, could indeed turn any space into a sanctuary for its performers and listeners, whether or not they believed the message, to at least contemplate the beauty of the music and the possibility of the story therein.\(^{252}\)

The advertisements may have acknowledged that this was a concert rather than a sacred service, but they also recognized the inherently sacred nature of the piece. Paul Larson cites a *Daily Bethlehem Times* article printed on 1 June, 1888, three days before the performance, that describes “the breadth and dignity of style possible only with music of so elevated and sacred a character.”\(^{253}\) The *Bethlehem Globe-Times* also contained an article about the composition on 1 June, 1888 entitled “The Passion Music.” This article extols the work as “the perfection of church music,” and remarks on the text given to the Evangelist: “It is impossible to extol too highly the narrative portion of the oratorio. The words are declaimed in the manner of the loftiest oratory, and in some places with pathos that seems to be in very unison with the fervent feeling of the Evangelist in relating the scenes he witnessed, and the doctrines on which the faith and the

\(^{252}\) For a more in-depth discussion of how created atmosphere can play a role in and/or be created by a musical performance, see Andrew McGraw, “Atmosphere as a Concept for Ethnomusicology: Comparing the Gamelatron and Gamelan,” *Ethnomusicology* 60, no. 1 (2016): 125–47, doi:10.5406/ethnomusicology.60.1.0125.

\(^{253}\) Larson, *An American Musical Dynasty*, 204.
teaching of his life were founded.” This performance may have taken place in the Parochial School, but both performers and audience were aware of the gravity of the text and the meaning instilled in the music by J. S. Bach.

Similarly, the Handel and Haydn Society made note of the sacredness of the work being performed regardless of the concert location. In the Program Booklet for the 1874 Triennial Festival (the second time the H&H performed part of the Passion), the following is printed in the program notes:

This sublime work, which is more and more regarded as the greatest among all the great works of sacred music, has been hitherto unknown here, save through a single performance of selections at the Triennial Festival of 1871 . . . And no music ever written, not excepting ‘The Messiah,’ is so steeped in the most wholesome, tender, deep religious feeling. It goes down into the individual, private soul, pleads for and with the contrite and believing heart, and lends sympathetic voice to every Christian’s personal and private feeling to and for the Saviour. Handel, on the other hand, is universal, speaking to and for mankind. Instead of the mournful monotony one might expect in such an oratorio of grief, one meets in it continually fresh beauties, and new phases of expression; and the wondering attention is excited at almost every step by rare and exquisite surprises both in musical idea and form. It is full of living, stirring scenes, and of fine and vivid character-painting, which is dramatic in the purest sense. And, while the text may dwell upon details of physical pain and sacrifice, the music all the while lifts you above the physical, brings out the heart of the tragedy, causes the spirit to shine through it, pointing not chiefly to the wounds which Christ bore in the flesh, but to his wounded love for man and for his persecutors. So, after all, instead of being one long wail, it is a cheering and divine interpreter of sorrow, and sings the spiritual victory; so that the hearer’s soul is not depressed, but raised to a holy atmosphere of all serenity and sweetness.

Thus Mendelssohn and the Singakademie singers, the Bethlehem Choral Union, and the H&H respected the sacred content of the pieces, and aimed to give the narrative content in as

255 Book of Programs from the Third Triennial Festival, 1874, Notes, p. 27–28, Boston Public Library, Handel and Hayden MS 5084 Box 7, Folder 33, Programs April 1870–December 1874, Courtesy of the Trustees of the BPL/Rare Books.
accurately and emotionally intact a manner as possible, such that their listeners would be able to connect with the story and with Bach’s original intent.

Performance Practice

Just as the approaches to space and pedagogy were quite different between the two ensembles, so were the performances themselves. The actual performance practice of these two ensembles in terms of amount of the work performed, instrumentation, size of ensemble, and leadership style (conducting from the podium vs. from a keyboard instrument) were quite different from one another, and some comparisons may be drawn between both these performances and Mendelssohn’s 1829 Bach revival in order to understand how the Passions were viewed as adaptable to the needs of particular ensembles.

The first issue is that Mendelssohn did not actually perform the entirety of the St. Matthew Passion. He made a series of cuts and edits to make the piece more suitable for his nineteenth century audience. The Handel and Haydn Society also made cuts for their first three performances of the work, gradually expanding the number (and changing which) movements were presented. The cuts were made to suit the needs of the choir and audience, but they were different than those made by Mendelssohn. The motivations behind the cuts and the application of the changes will shed light on the differing needs of an early nineteenth-century European audience and a later nineteenth-century American audience. The Choral Union performed all of the St. John Passion in their 1888 concert, so we will revisit this performance after discussing the score edits of Mendelssohn and the H&H.

In terms of motivation, Mendelssohn and Eduard Devrient knew that cuts would have to be made in order to both shorten the work and remove some aspects of the baroque style that the
audience would consider outdated, such as small ensemble size, Baroque instruments, eighteenth-century harmonizations, and length of the work; Mendelssohn combatted some of these by using a comparatively larger ensemble, more “Romantic” orchestrations and harmonizations, adding tempo and dynamic markings, and cutting specific movements.\textsuperscript{256} Several other issues that their teacher Carl Friedrich Zelter brought to light were that the work was extremely difficult, violinists could no longer play that style of music, and that if it were even possible, the Passions would have already been performed.\textsuperscript{257} Nevertheless, the two took on the daunting task of presenting the \textit{St. Matthew Passion} in a nineteenth-century environment. Devrient recounts some of the difficulties they faced with the piece: “It necessarily contained much that belonged to a former age, and what we had at heart was to convince people of its intrinsic greatness. Most of the songs would have to be omitted; of others only the symphonies could be given: the art of the Evangelist would have to be shorn of all that was not essential to the recital of the Passion. We often differed, for to us it was a matter of conscience; but what we finally determined upon seems to have been the right thing, for it has been adopted at most of the performances of the work.”\textsuperscript{258}

What were these cuts exactly? Michael Marissen remarks that “the Matthew Passion focuses much more on Christ as ‘suffering servant,’ one who is guiltless and whose death is brought on by the guilt of \textit{all} (and here the Jews \textit{and} the Romans are instrumental in bringing about Christ’s death).”\textsuperscript{259} Though this may be the case, as a Jew, Mendelssohn was likely hesitant to promote anything that seemed to be casting blame towards Jewish people. Indeed,

\textsuperscript{256} For more details on the changes, see Devrient and Macfarren, \textit{My Recollections of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, and His Letters to Me}.  
\textsuperscript{258} Devrient and Macfarren, \textit{My Recollections of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, and His Letters to Me}, 6.  
\textsuperscript{259} Marissen, “Religious Aims in Mendelssohn’s 1829 Berlin-Singakademie Performances of Bach’s St. Matthew Passion,” 719–20.
Marissen notes that “nearly all of the cuts are in texts that ran the risk of being perceived as anti-Jewish,” and cut numerous arias, \(^{260}\) “some of the Biblical account, and some of the chorales.”\(^{261}\) Marissen argues that the cuts from the recitatives must have been textually motivated, as they only remove a few seconds of music from the overall running time of the performance: “all of these cuts remove from the text negative character depiction of Jews;” examples of cuts include passages about false witnesses, the betrayal of Christ, and Pilate’s implication of the Jews when he remarked how they complained against Christ.\(^{262}\) Mendelssohn also removed the recitatives that related the role of women as witnesses. While this would certainly be decried today, in the nineteenth century it would likely have been viewed as improper or unnecessary for women to assume such an important role in the story; Mendelssohn was only following the societal norms of his day.

In total, Mendelssohn cut ten of the *Passion* arias, six recitatives, phrases from five more recitatives, and six choruses/chorales.\(^{263}\) While some of the chorale cuts were likely motivated by textual considerations,\(^{264}\) they also took up a larger portion of performance time than the recitatives. Because of the cut chorales and arias, Mendelssohn was able to make the *St. Matthew Passion* a much shorter concert event. Audiences were more familiar with works such as Handel’s *Messiah* and Haydn’s *Creation* in terms of large choral-orchestral works, and these could each be performed in around two and a half hours or fewer (and later works such as

\(^{260}\) Marissen claims that Mendelssohn cut all but two arias, but more recent research by Peter Ward Jones posits that Mendelssohn actually programmed all but five arias. See Peter Ward Jones, “Mendelssohn’s Performances of the ‘Matthäus-Passion’: Considerations of the Documentary Evidence,” *Music & Letters* 97, no. 3 (2016): 409–64.

\(^{261}\) Marissen, “Religious Aims in Mendelssohn’s 1829 Berlin-Singakademie Performances of Bach’s St. Matthew Passion,” 722.

\(^{262}\) Marissen, “Religious Aims in Mendelssohn’s 1829 Berlin-Singakademie Performances of Bach’s St. Matthew Passion,” 722.


\(^{264}\) Marissen, “Religious Aims in Mendelssohn’s 1829 Berlin-Singakademie Performances of Bach’s St. Matthew Passion,” 723.
Mendelssohn’s *Elijah* also fall into this category); the *St. Matthew Passion* in its entirety is generally longer than these works, especially if the conductor chooses slow tempi. Even when these other works were performed, it was a common practice to shorten oratorios for concert performance in the nineteenth century.\(^{265}\) Another perception of the cuts has more to do with performance practice itself. It was important for this work to appeal to modern audiences and not to be perceived as old-fashioned, since the Baroque era was not in the terribly distant past.\(^{266}\) As Klaus Winkler writes, some cuts and edits allowed Mendelssohn to “produce a dramatic concentration on the content of the biblical text . . .” and “to stress the emotions in the sense of the romantic period, and to achieve this by omitting those parts which owed something to the baroque doctrine of affects and could barely be reconstructed a hundred years later.”\(^{267}\)

The Handel and Haydn Society also cut movements in order to bring the work into their time and place, and went through several sets of cuts before finally performing the entire work in 1879. Perkins and Dwight describe the beginnings of the project in their *History of the Handel and Haydn Society*. In their account of the annual meeting during the fifty-fourth season (June 3, 1868 to May 31, 1869), they recount the pieces discussed for the upcoming performances: “Nor did it look by any means impossible that the old Society would brace itself up to the work of making a strong beginning upon Bach, and devoting some of its time all winter to the study of


\(^{266}\) Later in the nineteenth century, performers had fewer qualms about Baroque music; as more and more time progressed and Romantic music became the dominant style, the more intriguing and exotic Baroque music became. Thanks to Michael Broyles for our helpful discussion of this.

the *Passion Music*, so as to bring it out, in whole or part, during the next spring."\(^{268}\) The writers express delight at the prospect, and remark upon the historical significance for the Society.\(^{269}\)

While the ensemble was aware of Mendelssohn’s performances, and had even performed some of Mendelssohn’s works themselves, they did not utilize his score: “As for Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion Music*, the government had already taken measures to procure the most approved edition of the orchestral and vocal parts, and to have the text done into English in as close and singable a version as possible, so that both might be published here, and the study of the great work begin with energy, in the hope of bringing out a goodly portion of it during Passion week.”\(^{270}\)

Changing the performance language is another example of the ensembles performing Bach’s music for their own time and place. The Handel and Haydn Society decided that the best option for both the singers and the audience was to present this piece in English, thus rendering it more understandable and hopefully more intriguing to the audience. Though this resolute action of procuring the parts seemed to herald early success, the ensemble was not actually able to begin rehearsing the work until 2 January, 1870, due to the rigors of their First Triennial Festival in 1868 and the aftermath and celebration of the Union’s victory in the American Civil War.\(^{271}\)

In the case of the Handel and Haydn Society, as well as Mendelssohn, cuts had to be made for the first performance in 1871. H. Earle Johnson referred to this performance as “‘Selections’ from the *St. Matthew Passion*.\(^{272}\) Perhaps the most shocking cut was the opening double chorus! Perkins and Dwight do not specifically address the reason this was cut, though

\(^{268}\) Perkins and Dwight, *History of the Handel and Haydn Society, of Boston, Massachusetts*, 279.
\(^{269}\) Perkins and Dwight, *History of the Handel and Haydn Society, of Boston, Massachusetts*, 279.
\(^{270}\) Perkins and Dwight, *History of the Handel and Haydn Society, of Boston, Massachusetts*, 279.
they do mention that this may be the most difficult piece of music in existence to execute.\textsuperscript{273}

Apparently the performance still gave a good representation of each type of movement, as told by Perkins and Dwight: “the narrative recitative, the recitative in character, the formal aria (preceded sometimes by accompanied \textit{cantabile} recitative), the harmonized choral, and the grand chorus (often double): enough of it, indeed, in the First Part, to preserve something of the progress of the mournful story.”\textsuperscript{274}

While many of the cuts were different from those of the Mendelssohn performance, some similarities may be observed. In Part I, movements 8 (aria), 12 (recit.), and 13 (aria) were cut from both performances. The Handel and Haydn Society cut nearly all of Part II, which makes Mendelssohn’s performance longer by far; in terms of overlap in Part II, both ensembles performed movement 39 (aria), and 54 (chorale, though Mendelssohn cut verse 2), and the final movement (chorus). Table 1 provides a more detailed overview of this information as well as that in the succeeding paragraphs.\textsuperscript{275}

When the Handel and Haydn Society performed the work again in 1874, they added many movements to their previous performance. Interestingly, the cuts made for that year’s performance more closely resemble Mendelssohn’s than did the first performance by the Handel and Haydn Society. In Part I, both ensembles cut movement 8 (aria). In Part II, both groups chose to cut movement 31 (recit.), 32 (chorale), 34 (recit.), 35 (aria), 37 (chorale), 40 (chorale), 46 (chorale), 51 (recit.), 52 (aria), 60 (aria), and 65 (aria). Both ensembles were creating editions

\textsuperscript{273} Perkins and Dwight, \textit{History of the Handel and Haydn Society, of Boston, Massachusetts}, 310–11.
\textsuperscript{274} Perkins and Dwight, \textit{History of the Handel and Haydn Society, of Boston, Massachusetts}, 308.
\textsuperscript{275} See Table 1 below. The information is compiled from the Michael Marissen article, the Grant Cook article, the Ward Jones article, the Perkins/Dwight account of the Handel and Haydn Society, and programs from the 1871 and 1874 performances, all of which are listed in the Bibliography. The movement numbers correspond to those in the Neue Bach Ausgabe edition.
of the work that would be successfully performed by their ensembles and best received by their audiences, which is why there is some discrepancy as to which movements are performed.

The next *Passion* performance of the Handel and Haydn Society, presented on 9 April, 1876 (Palm Sunday), presented about three quarters of the *Passion* and added some of the previously un-performed recitatives, arias, and choruses; this meant, however, that some of the other arias had to be sacrificed in order to keep the concert at a manageable length (indeed, both the 1874 and 1876 performances cut seven arias total–different arias were performed in each, however).²⁷⁶ Perkins and Dwight remark that “the most important additions [to the 1874 performance] were a number of those short, vindictive and excited choruses of Jews, taunting and clamoring for crucifixion . . . “²⁷⁷ In comparison with Mendelssohn, both performances cut movements 13 (aria), 31 (recit.), 35 (aria), 37 (chorale), 40 (chorale), 44 (chorale), 46 (chorale), 52 (aria), 56 (recit.), 57 (aria), and 65 (aria). Dwight and Perkins only mention added chorales when writing of the 1876 performance, so one may assume that they would have remarked upon subtracted chorales, had some existed.

The full American premiere of the work occurred in 1879, and finally all the movements were included.²⁷⁸ Movements 30 (aria), 35 (aria), 40 (chorale), 46 (chorale), 52 (aria), and 65 (aria) had not been sung in any of the performances discussed. Movements 9d (recit.), 10 (chorale), 14 (recit.), 15 (chorale), 24 (recit.), 25 (chorale), 26 (recit.), 28 (recit.), 29 (chorale), 31 (recit.), 37 (chorale), 43 (recit.), 50a (recit.), 53 (recit.), 58b-c (chorus/recit.), 61 (recit./chorus), 62 (chorale), and 66 (recit./chorus) had not been sung in any of the H&H performances up to this point, thus this was most likely the actual American premiere of these movements specifically.

²⁷⁸ H. Earle Johnson, *First Performances in America to 1900: Works with Orchestra*, Bibliographies in American Music, no. 4 (Detroit: Published for the College Music Society by Information Coordinators, 1979), 16.
Table 1: Comparison of Movements Cut from Performances of the *St. Matthew Passion*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement Numbers (taken from the <em>Neue Bach Ausgabe</em>)</th>
<th>Mendelssohn 1829</th>
<th>H&amp;H 1871</th>
<th>H&amp;H 1874</th>
<th>H&amp;H 1876</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part I</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Chorus and chorale</td>
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<td>Performed</td>
<td>Performed</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Recit</td>
<td>Performed</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Performed</td>
<td>Performed</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Chorale</td>
<td>Performed</td>
<td>Performed</td>
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<td>Performed</td>
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<tr>
<td>4a. Recit</td>
<td>Performed</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Performed</td>
<td>Performed</td>
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<td>4b. Chorus</td>
<td>Performed</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Performed</td>
<td>Performed</td>
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<td>4c. Recit</td>
<td>Performed</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Performed</td>
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<tr>
<td>4d. Chorus</td>
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<td>Performed</td>
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<td>Cut</td>
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<td>Performed</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Recit</td>
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<td>Performed</td>
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<td>Performed</td>
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<td>6. Aria</td>
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<td>Performed</td>
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<td>7. Recit</td>
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<td>8. Aria</td>
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<td>11. Recit</td>
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<td>12. Recit</td>
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<td>Cut</td>
<td>Performed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Movement Numbers (taken from the Neue Bach Ausgabe)</td>
<td>Mendelssohn 1829</td>
<td>H&amp;H 1871</td>
<td>H&amp;H 1874</td>
<td>H&amp;H 1876</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Aria</td>
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<td>15. Chorale</td>
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<td>16. Recit</td>
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<td>17. Chorale</td>
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<td>19. Solo/Chorale</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Aria</td>
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<td>Performed</td>
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<td>Cut</td>
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<td>21. Recit</td>
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<td>Performed</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. Recit</td>
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<td>23. Aria</td>
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<td>24. Recit</td>
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<td>Cut</td>
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<tr>
<td>26. Recit</td>
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<td>Cut</td>
<td>Cut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27a-b. Aria/Chorus</td>
<td>Performed</td>
<td>Performed</td>
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<tr>
<td>28. Recit</td>
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<td>Cut</td>
<td>Cut</td>
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<tr>
<td>29. Chorale</td>
<td>Performed</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Cut</td>
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</table>

**Part II**

| 30. Aria                                           | Performed      | Cut      | Cut      | Cut      |
| 31. Recit                                         | Cut            | Cut      | Cut      | Cut      |
| 32. Chorale                                        | Cut            | Cut      | Cut      | Performed|
| 33. Recit                                         | Phrase “and though many witnesses came forth, all testimony was found false” | Cut | Cut | Performed |
Table 1 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement Numbers (taken from the Neue Bach Ausgabe)</th>
<th>Mendelssohn 1829</th>
<th>H&amp;H 1871</th>
<th>H&amp;H 1874</th>
<th>H&amp;H 1876</th>
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<tr>
<td>34. Recit</td>
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<td>35. Aria</td>
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<td>36b. Chorus</td>
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<td>Cut</td>
<td>Performed</td>
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<tr>
<td>36c. Recit</td>
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<td>Cut</td>
<td>Cut</td>
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<td>Cut</td>
<td>Cut</td>
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<td>37. Chorale</td>
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<td>Cut</td>
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<td>Cut</td>
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<td>40. Chorale</td>
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<td>41a. Recit</td>
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<td>Cut</td>
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<td>41b. Chorus</td>
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<td>41c. Recit</td>
<td>Performed</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Performed</td>
<td>Performed</td>
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<tr>
<td>42. Aria</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Performed</td>
<td>Performed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. Recit</td>
<td>Betrayal of Christ for thirty pieces of silver is cut, also Pilate’s question “Don’t you hear how severely they complain against you?”</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Cut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. Chorale</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Performed</td>
<td>Cut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45a. Recit</td>
<td>Phrase “that they had turned [Christ] over out of envy”</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Performed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement Numbers (taken from the Neue Bach Ausgabe)</td>
<td>Mendelssohn 1829</td>
<td>H&amp;H 1871</td>
<td>H&amp;H 1874</td>
<td>H&amp;H 1876</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>45b. Chorus</td>
<td>Performed</td>
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<td>Cut</td>
<td>Performed</td>
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<tr>
<td>46. Chorale</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Cut</td>
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<td>47. Recit</td>
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<td>50b-e. Chorus/Recit</td>
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<td>Cut</td>
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<td>51. Recit</td>
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<tr>
<td>54. Chorale</td>
<td>Verse two cut</td>
<td>Performed</td>
<td>Performed</td>
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<td>55. Recit</td>
<td>Performed</td>
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<td>56. Recit</td>
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<td>57. Aria</td>
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<tr>
<td>58b-c. Chorus/Recit</td>
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</table>
Table 1 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement Numbers (taken from the Neue Bach Ausgabe)</th>
<th>Mendelssohn 1829</th>
<th>H&amp;H 1871</th>
<th>H&amp;H 1874</th>
<th>H&amp;H 1876</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>62. Chorale</td>
<td>Performed</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Cut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63a-c. Recit/Chorus</td>
<td>Phrase “and there were many women there” cut</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Performed</td>
<td>Performed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64. Recit</td>
<td>Performed</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Performed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65. Aria</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Cut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66a-c. Recit/Chorus</td>
<td>Sentence about the two Marys at the grave cut</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Cut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67. Recit</td>
<td>Performed</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Performed</td>
<td>Performed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68. Chorus</td>
<td>Performed</td>
<td>Performed</td>
<td>Performed</td>
<td>Performed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In some ways, stretching this work out over a decade allowed both the audience and the ensemble to grow more familiar with Bach’s music, and thus to be able to appreciate the full premiere when the time came. Performing Bach is no easy task, even for performers who have sung Handel and Haydn. By bringing bits and pieces to the musicians, Carl Zerrahn was able to build a choir capable of performing the *St. Matthew Passion* in its entirety, and he was also grooming an audience to be able to appreciate it. One can imagine the first time an audience was presented with Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* in comparison with that audience eight years later: at the full premiere, surely there were audience members who were waiting on their favorite movements and excited to hear those that had yet to be presented in the United States.

Unlike the H&H, the Bethlehem Choral Union performed the entirety of the *St. John Passion* on June 5, 1888, with no previous performances. Apparently unaware that this would be the American premiere until the day of the performance, they still gave their best efforts to this
endeavor. While they would certainly hope to present the piece in a way that was relevant and intriguing to their late nineteenth-century audience, this ensemble was also somewhat constrained by the availability of musical parts. According to the *Bethlehem Globe-Times*, these were nearly impossible to find: “Added interest will be given the accompaniments of the great work to be heard to-morrow night in Day School Hall, by the cooperation of the stringed instruments, the organ and piano. So rare is the St. John “Passion” in this country that after several unsuccessful attempts to procure the orchestral parts here the directors of the Choral Union were obliged to send to England for them, and could even there procure only the stringed quartette [sic], the other parts existing only in manuscript.”

Thus the orchestra consisted of strings playing quartet parts, piano, and Wolle conducting from the organ. Larson writes that Wolle played the wind and brass parts on the organ while also improvising from the figured bass Bach had written. The review of the concert describes the ensemble as a “large body of singers and players,” though it continues to note that “the orchestra did its duty quite satisfactorily, even though weak in numbers, and of course the piano parts were admirably taken care of by Mrs. Wilson.” Raymond Walters notes that there were one hundred and fifteen singers participating in this concert. This number is much higher than Joshua Rifkin’s suggestion of one voice per part for “proper” performance practice! Another issue was that of the solos and recitatives. Wolle had written to Mrs. W. L. Estes, requesting her to

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281 “Bach’s ‘Passion:’ The First Rendition of this Masterpiece in America Given by the Bethlehem Choral Union,” *Bethlehem Globe-Times* XXIL no. 106 (June 6, 1888): p. 1, col 7. Unfortunately the program for the concert is not extant, thus the exact number of orchestral players is unknown at this time.
sing as a soloist in the *Passion*, since she had sung for the Choral Union before.\textsuperscript{284} The *Bethlehem Globe-Times* reports that

The Choral Union has secured the services of Miss Maggie A. Nevins, well known here for her admirable singing of the ‘Elijah’ and ‘Messiah’ solos, in whose hands the soprano airs are in good keeping. Secondly, the contralto air, ‘It is Finished,’ is such a piece of pathos as has rarely been equaled. The Choral Union is to be congratulated that Mrs. W. L. Estes has generously accepted an invitation to assist in making the society’s first rendition of Bach’s ‘Passion’ music a success, it being a long time since Mrs. Estes has favored an audience in Day School Hall. The difficult and perhaps thankless tenor recitative has been undertaken by William Hamilton, the two characters written for bass being in the hands of Messrs. C. T. Bender and W. P. Thomas, all of whom have given the work much and conscientious study, with very satisfactory results. Let our home talent be well encouraged on Tuesday next.\textsuperscript{285}

Even so, at the time of the concert, no one felt comfortable singing the recitatives. The review of the concert on 6 June, 1888, informs us that “Rev. Edwin G. Klose read the connecting parts of the Scripture narrative very expressively.”\textsuperscript{286} While Bach intended for the recitatives to be sung, Wolle worked with the performing forces that were at his disposal. Rather than leave out the vital connecting narrative, he chose to have it read, which certainly seems more desirable than having it sung badly.

In contrast, both Mendelssohn and the Handel and Haydn Society had even larger ensembles and choruses. All three ensembles were much larger than those Bach would have likely had access to in his own time. The conductors were not necessarily interested in presenting the work as it was likely performed by Bach; rather, they wanted to present the piece in a way that would render Bach’s music beloved to nineteenth-century audiences. These audiences were

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Larson, *Bach for A Hundred Years*, 13.}
\footnote{“Bach’s ‘Passion.’ The First Rendition of this Masterpiece in America Given by the Bethlehem Choral Union,” *Bethlehem Globe-Times* XXII no. 106 (June 6, 1888): p. 1, col 7.}
\end{footnotes}
accustomed to performing forces and luscious orchestrations, so Wolle, Mendelssohn, and Zerrahn, especially, gave them Bach on a grand and massive scale.

Mendelssohn directed a chorus of forty-seven sopranos, thirty-six altos, thirty-four tenors, and forty-one basses. This totals to one hundred and fifty-eight voices. The ensemble was comprised of Mendelssohn’s core group of singers that had studied the Passion, along with singers from the Academy choir. According to Clement’s description, the total number of parts used was one hundred and thirty choral parts and twenty-six other vocal parts. This number is somewhat substantiated by the number of choral parts preserved in various collections, including the Bodleian Library, Utrecht University, and the Mendelssohn-Haus in Leipzig, of which there are eighty-six choral parts. The rest are conjectured to be in private possession. Mintz writes that the soloists “were some of Berlin’s most popular singers.” These were from the Royal Opera; Anna Milder-Hauptmann sang the soprano solos, Pauline von Schätzel served as the alto soloist, Heinrich Stümer sang the role of the Evangelist, Carl Adam Bader sang Pilate and Peter, and Eduard Devrient sang the role of Jesus.

While the exact number of orchestral musicians is unknown, based on the number of copies of each orchestral part used by Mendelssohn’s ensemble, Peter Ward Jones has posited forty-four strings and twenty winds, plus piano, for a total of sixty-seven orchestral musicians. This is slightly smaller than the size of other large choral-orchestral performances in the early

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288 For more details on the small group of singers and Mendelssohn’s desire for the Academy’s participation, see Devrient and Macfarren, My Recollections of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, and His Letters to Me.
290 Clement, “Mendelssohn and Bach’s Matthew Passion,” 147.
nineteenth century, in which there were generally around half as many orchestra members as
singers.\textsuperscript{294} In the case of the Lower Rhine Festivals, the number of orchestral musicians was over
half the number of vocalists in the years surrounding 1829.\textsuperscript{295} Nevertheless, sixty-seven
orchestral musicians was still a large instrumental ensemble for the early nineteenth century.

Mendelssohn’s players were drawn from the Ripienschule, and there were some
additional volunteer professionals.\textsuperscript{296} Devrient remarked that the orchestra “consisted mainly of
amateurs, only the leaders of the string and principal wind instruments belonged to the royal
chapel.”\textsuperscript{297} There were a few changes to the orchestra, however. Mendelssohn replaced the oboi
d’amore with clarinets, the oboi da caccia with corni di bassetto, and the basso continuo with
piano. Not only were these instruments more readily available at the time, their timbres were
much more familiar to audiences than that of Baroque instruments such as the oboe da caccia.\textsuperscript{298}
Mendelssohn played a piano, as that was the available instrument in the Singakadimie concert
hall at that time, and conducted from his position at the keyboard.\textsuperscript{299} Through use of a large
ensemble with several updated instruments, Mendelssohn used what was available and brought
Bach’s original soundscape a century into the future.

Gerald Hendrie points out that the changes in instruments would have affected the sound
of Mendelssohn’s ensemble, both in terms of using different instruments such as piano instead of
harpsichord/organ, and in terms of instruments being modified and updated through the years.
The Romantic-era orchestra used by Mendelssohn possibly had a higher string to woodwind ratio

\textsuperscript{294} Mintz, “Some Aspects of the Revival of Bach,” 210–211.
\textsuperscript{295} Cecelia Hopkins Porter, “The New Public and the Reordering of the Musical Establishment: The Lower Rhine
\textsuperscript{297} Devrient and Macfarren, \textit{My Recollections of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, and His Letters to Me}, 59.
\textsuperscript{298} Clement, “Mendelssohn and Bach’s Matthew Passion,” 142.
\textsuperscript{299} Mintz, “Some Aspects of the Revival of Bach,” 211; Ward Jones, “Mendelssohn’s Performances of the
than that of an eighteenth-century ensemble, changing the entire balance and dynamic quality. At least for Mendelssohn’s rehearsals, Eduard Devrient gives an account of the setup: the piano was placed between the two choirs, with Mendelssohn playing there. The positioning allowed him to face the second choir and orchestra with the first choir behind him. At this time, the custom was still for the conductor to face the audience, with the exception of opera conductors. Devrient describes the positioning: “the wind instruments were placed at the back, above the semicircular platform, and extended towards the small concert-room through three open doors. The task of keeping steady this waving mass devolved upon Eduard Rietz [the concertmaster].

The Handel and Haydn Society’s performances were comprised of somewhat different ensembles than the one Mendelssohn used. In fact, ensemble was the key factor that prevented the Handel and Haydn Society from performing the work earlier. In March of 1870, it was decided that the Creation must be substituted for the intended Passion performance on April 16, for several reasons. The factors were the winter weather, which made rehearsals an apparently treacherous destination, the issue of finding adequate soloists, and a sufficient number of orchestral musicians, as Grant W. Cook relates that “many had already been contracted for Saturday evening theater performances.”

When they finally were able to perform portions of the work on May 13, 1871, the Handel and Haydn Society did not take Mendelssohn’s ensemble size as an example. Carl Zerrahn more closely followed the current Boston trend of presenting enormous ensembles in concerts, such as the 1869 Peace Jubilee which presented over 10,000 singers in the chorus, and

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300 Hendrie, Mendelssohn’s Rediscovery of Bach, 95. In addition to significantly larger string sections, larger numbers of woodwinds began to be used in orchestras in the nineteenth century as well. We do not have the exact numbers for Mendelssohn’s ensemble, so it is possible that the texture balanced itself out in the end. Thanks to Michael Broyles for our discussion of this.

301 Devrient and Macfarren, My Recollections of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, and His Letters to Me, 59.

302 Perkins and Dwight, History of the Handel and Haydn Society, of Boston, Massachusetts, 289.

the later 1872 Peace Jubilee which boasted over 20,000 singers, both of which he conducted.\textsuperscript{304}

For the H&H’s Second Triennial Festival, at which their first \textit{Passion} performance took place, there were over seven hundred singers in the chorus, and the orchestra was made up of one hundred and thirteen musicians gathered from Boston, New York, and Philadelphia; indeed, the number given in the annual report on 29 May, sixteen days after the performance, was seven hundred and thirty-nine: two hundred and thirty-four sopranos, one hundred and ninety-four altos, one hundred and thirty-seven tenors, and one hundred and seventy-four basses.\textsuperscript{305} Cook writes that the soloists were regarded as “some of the finest vocal soloists from New York and Boston, and two singers ‘expressly’ from London: soprano Erminia Rudersdorff and tenor William H. Cummings, both experienced Bach singers.”\textsuperscript{306} Other soloists included Mr. William J. Winch as the Evangelist, Mr. Myron W. Whitney, bass, and Miss Antoinette Sterling, contralto.\textsuperscript{307} The program cites B. J. Lang as the festival organist, so it seems a safe assumption that he covered the organ part.\textsuperscript{308} Needless to say, there must have been some issues of balance with such a large choral ensemble against such a proportionately smaller orchestra. One can imagine the issues of balance between the soloists and chorus, as well! The Society took this under advisement, and a “weeding out” process began after this performance.\textsuperscript{309} The reviews commented upon the overall excellence and spirit of the chorus, as well as the difficulties faced by the soloists; these were apparently only surmounted by Mme. Rudersdorff, though her English pronunciation was found wanting.\textsuperscript{310}

\textsuperscript{304} Johnson and Newman, “Zerrahn, Carl.”
\textsuperscript{305} Cook, "Bach in Boston," 24.
\textsuperscript{308} Book of Programs, Second Triennial Festival, May 1871, Handel and Haydn Society Archives, Folder: Premieres 1859–1965, The Handel and Haydn Society, Boston, MA.
\textsuperscript{309} Cook, “Bach in Boston,” 23.
\textsuperscript{310} Cook, "Bach in Boston, 23–24.
Fortunately, in the performances over the next few years, the size of the chorus diminished. The second performance was given on 8 May, 1874; the chorus had shrunk to six hundred: one hundred and seventy sopranos, one hundred and fifty altos, one hundred and thirty tenors, and one hundred and fifty basses. According to Cook, “the Festival orchestra numbered eighty-five; sixty players from the Theodore Thomas orchestra of New York, and twenty-five additional players from the Boston area, including musicians from the Mendelssohn and Beethoven Clubs.”

The soloists were Miss Edith Wynne, Miss Adelaide Phillipps, Mr. Wm. J. Winch, Mr. Myron W. Whitney, and Mr. J. F. Rudolphson. This performance introduced the opening double chorus, which requires a boy choir. The Handel and Haydn Society borrowed a sixty-voice boy choir from the Rice School. In his edition, Franz “designates clarinets and soprano trombone to double the boys’ voices; however, Carl Zerrahn opted for the cornet in place of the trombone. Otto Dresel accompanied the additional portions of the narrative recitative on an upright piano,” according to Cook. B. J. Lang is once again listed as the festival organist, so it seems reasonable to assume that he covered the organ parts. Unfortunately, in this performance the orchestra apparently had no sense of dynamic contrast, and played forte the entire time. This was rectified in the subsequent 1876 performance.

The Records of the Handel and Haydn Society give details about the 9 April, 1876 performance. “The Chorus numbered 500, the Orchestra 50, and a choir of boys from the public schools sang the Chorale in the first part. The audience was large though the receipts were not

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314 Book of Programs from the Third Triennial Festival, 1874, Notes, p. 27–28, Boston Public Library, Handel and Hayden MS 5084 Box 7, Folder 33, Programs April 1870–December 1874, Courtesy of the Trustees of the BPL/Rare Books.
equal to the expenses. The performance made a great impression, and the work may now be considered sure pay.”

The records of the rehearsals between 1 April and the performance on 9 April listed one hundred boys in the boy choir, so it may be assumed that the actual number in the performance was similar. Miss Beebe served as soprano soloist, Mrs. Laura Hastings was the alto soloist for Part I, Mme. Rudersdorff for Part II, and Mr. M. W. Whitney was scheduled to sing the role of Jesus, but was hoarse, so J. F. Rudolphsen stepped into the role; J. F. Winch sang the other bass solos, and Wm. J. Winch was the Evangelist and tenor soloist. Dwight writes that B. J. Lang served as organist. Other changes since 1874 were the added (and subtracted) movements, making this a slightly longer performance.

The full premiere in 1879 was perhaps the closest to Bach’s original intent. It was performed on Good Friday, 11 April, 1879, finally fulfilling the goal of the H&H. Just as in its original premiere, the work was split in half. Part I was performed in the afternoon at 3:00, and Part II was given in the evening at 8:00. The conductor either took slow tempi or included many breaks between movements, for the first half of the work took two hours, and the second half nearly two and a half hours. An upright piano was used again to accompany the Evangelist’s recitatives. The organ was again used in specified places, some of which doubled both the instruments and voices for chorales; B. J. Lang, always the organist, again served this...

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316 Records of the Handel & Haydn Society, 1868–1881, vol. 8, of the Handel & Haydn Society, April 9, 1876, p. 239. Boston Public Library, Courtesy of the Trustees of the BPL/Rare Books.
317 Records of the Handel & Haydn Society, 1868–1881, vol. 8, April 1–9, 1876, p. 238–239, Boston Public Library, Courtesy of the Trustees of the BPL/Rare Books.
319 Perkins and Dwight, History of the Handel and Haydn Society, of Boston, Massachusetts, 365.
320 More details on the added and subtracted movements may be seen in Table 1.
322 Perkins and Dwight, History of the Handel and Haydn Society, of Boston, Massachusetts, 403.
role, playing “discreetly throughout the work,” as reported by Dwight.\footnote{Perkins and Dwight, \textit{History of the Handel and Haydn Society, of Boston, Massachusetts}, 404; and 1879 Bach’s St. Matthew Passion Program, Part I, Handel and Haydn Society Archives, Folder 190, The Handel and Haydn Society, Boston, MA.} According to the Records of the Handel and Haydn Society, there were four hundred and fifty chorus members and fifty instrumentalists in the orchestra. The record of a rehearsal on 6 April notes that there were eighty boys in the boy choir, so we may assume that a similar number sang in the performance,\footnote{Records of the Handel & Haydn Society, 1868–1881, vol. 8, April 11, 1879, p. 272, Boston Public Library, Courtesy of the Trustees of the BPL/Rare Books.} this ensemble was comprised of boys from the Brimmer, Dwight, and Rice schools, trained by Mr. J. B. Sharland.\footnote{1879 Bach’s St. Matthew Passion Program, Part I, Handel and Haydn Society Archives, Folder 190, The Handel and Haydn Society, Boston, MA.} To date, this was the smallest chorus to sing the \textit{Passion} in the Handel and Haydn Society’s history—still remarkably large when compared with both Mendelssohn’s ensemble and the Bethlehem Choral Union! The soloists were Miss Henrietta Beebe, Miss Edith Abell, Mr. W. Courtney, Mr. John F. Winch, and Mr. Myron W. Whitney.\footnote{1879 Bach’s St. Matthew Passion Program, Part I, Handel and Haydn Society Archives, Folder 190, The Handel and Haydn Society, Boston, MA.} An unforeseen issue in terms of balance occurred when many of the men in the chorus did not appear for the first half in the afternoon!\footnote{Cook, “Bach in Boston,” 26–27.} Perhaps they were unaware that the piece was given in two parts, or were confused by the way things were rehearsed—regardless, we may surmise that the sound leaned more heavily towards the treble in the afternoon (see table 2).

One other issue of performance practice is that of language and further score editing. Besides cutting movements, Mendelssohn edited the music in a few places to make it sound more current when compared to nineteenth-century pieces. The Handel and Haydn Society also changed a bit of orchestration on occasion, and both the Handel and Haydn Society and the Bethlehem Choral Union performed the \textit{Passions} in English.
Table 2: Comparison of Ensemble Sizes for Performances of the
*St. Matthew* and *St. John Passions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mendelssohn 1829 <em>St. Matthew</em></th>
<th>H&amp;H 1871 <em>St. Matthew</em></th>
<th>H&amp;H 1874 <em>St. Matthew</em></th>
<th>H&amp;H 1876 <em>St. Matthew</em></th>
<th>H&amp;H 1879 <em>St. Matthew</em></th>
<th>Bethlehem Choral Union 1888 <em>St. John</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chorus</strong></td>
<td>158 singers</td>
<td>739 chorus, no boys’ choir</td>
<td>600 chorus, 60 boys’ choir</td>
<td>500 chorus, 100 boys’ choir</td>
<td>450 chorus, 80 boys’ choir</td>
<td>115 chorus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orchestra</strong></td>
<td>~67</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>String Quartet parts + piano and organ (total number unknown)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Choral Union used Troutbeck’s translation from the 1872 Novello Edition.\(^{328}\) The H&H, as has been discussed above, had a translation created for their Ditson scores.

Mendelssohn wanted the work to sound more like a nineteenth-century composition for the sake of his audience. Clement philosophizes that “the composition was considered too difficult for the general audience, not yet ready to understand and appreciate Bach’s genius.”\(^{329}\) While removing movements and changing the size and sound of the ensemble were a few ways to bring the audience a more modern sounding Bach, Mendelssohn also appealed to their sense of harmony and soundscape by changing orchestration and harmonization. One scoring change was that Mendelssohn added flutes and clarinets in octaves doubling the chorale of the opening movement.\(^{330}\) Another is related by Fanny Mendelssohn, Felix’s sister: “Felix went over the whole score, made a few judicious cuts, and only orchestrated the recitative, *And the veil of the* $$\text{328}$$ Larson, *Bach for One Hundred Years*, 12.
$$\text{329}$$ Clement, “Mendelssohn and Bach’s Matthew Passion,” 142.
temple was rent in twain.”

This, however, is not entirely true; Felix added a few more orchestration changes than perhaps Fanny was aware:

It was precisely those recitatives which drive the content of the plot forward that Mendelssohn particularly arranged. As the copy of the score available to him contained no figuring, he entered the harmonization for the recitatives which he desired in his own hand, his harmonization differing fundamentally from Bach’s in many places. The occasional fermatas over individual notes, tempo indications, instructions regarding dynamics, articulation and accents, most notably in the part of Christus, also enhance the concentration of content. Mendelssohn’s arrangement is, in other words, designed with a view to bringing out the crucial moments, to give expression to human emotions in a heightened form.

Mendelssohn’s goal was for the audience to be able to hear Bach as Mendelssohn did, not as Eduard Devrient described the popular conception of Bach: “unmelodious, dry, and unintelligible.” One way he combatted this was through writing in Italian tempo and expression markings at the beginning of movements. Winkler writes that “his aim was to portray the dramatic plot pointedly with people of ‘flesh and blood.’ The Opening and final choruses of the first part, ‘O Mensch, bewein dien Sünde gross,’ contain most careful markings in the romantic style.” While Fanny may have not realized the amount of material Mendelssohn changed, she did recognize the beauty he brought to the piece as a performer; she wrote of “the delight and surprise created by each new element—the solos, the orchestra, Felix’s splendid interpretation beginning to end by heart, all these were moments never to be forgotten.”

331 Hensel, The Mendelssohn Family (1729-1847) from Letters and Journals, 171.
332 Winkler, “Romantic Emotions. Mendelssohn’s Arrangement of Bach’s St. Matthew Passion.”
333 Devrient and Macfarren, My Recollections of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, and His Letters to Me, 47.
334 Hendrie, Mendelssohn’s Rediscovery of Bach, 91–93.
335 Winkler, “Romantic Emotions. Mendelssohn’s Arrangement of Bach’s St. Matthew Passion.”
places, Mendelssohn gave the audience a combination of what they were used to hearing and the beauty that Bach composed originally.

The Handel and Haydn Society took a different approach to orchestral scoring than that of Mendelssohn and the Singakademie. The Robert Franz edition added instruments to double the voices in some movements, and used clarinets, soprano trombone, and piano.\textsuperscript{337} Dwight notes the use of general “brass instruments” in his account of the 1871 performance.\textsuperscript{338} In the “Buß und Reu,” aria, the Franz edition notates “two flutes, in thirds and sixths, with string quartet made out from the figured bass.”\textsuperscript{339} He added brass instruments to the “Sind Blitze, Sind Donner” chorus. “Erbarme dich” was originally scored for string quartet, to which Franz added a quartet of clarinets and bassoons.\textsuperscript{340} None of these changes are remarkably drastic, but they certainly give the work a soundscape belonging to the nineteenth century rather than the eighteenth.

Thus each of the Passion performances were given for their specific times and places. The \textit{St. John Passion} performance by the Bethlehem Choral Union was likely given by the smallest ensemble, while the “Selections” of \textit{St. Matthew} performed by the H&H in 1871 were likely given by the largest. The needs and abilities of the communities determined the performance practice: the Choral Union was working with a lack of orchestral scores and soloists who could sing recitatives. The H&H wanted to dazzle Boston with their first rendition of part of the \textit{St. Matthew Passion}, and had the performing forces to do so. Mendelssohn had his own views on how the Passion should be presented in order to bring the work out of the Baroque era and into the nineteenth century, while the H&H and the Choral Union adapted their respective

\textsuperscript{338} Perkins and Dwight, \textit{History of the Handel and Haydn Society, of Boston, Massachusetts}, 313.
\textsuperscript{339} Perkins and Dwight, \textit{History of the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston, Massachusetts}, 311.
*Passion* premieres to their own American culture. In each context the performances were treated as concerts, but the inherent sacredness of the works was acknowledged, respected, and portrayed. The music was flexible enough to work in all of these contexts; thus audiences in both Europe and America were able to partake in nineteenth-century experiences of the *Passions*. 
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In 2017, the Handel and Haydn Society and the Bethlehem Bach Choir (the offspring of the Choral Union) continue to perform Bach’s *Passions* with regularity, as do many other ensembles such as the Chicago Bach Project, the Oregon Bach Festival chorus and orchestra, and the Carmel Bach Festival chorus and orchestra, which were formed because of the growing popularity of Bach’s choral-orchestral works instigated by these two earlier ensembles. Just as in the nineteenth century, the H&H and the Bach Choir perform the *Passions* in ways their twenty-first century audiences can appreciate, and they treat the sacred texts with reverence. Through ensembles such as these, Bach’s works have truly become part of the “universal church,” instead of remaining only suitable for a Lutheran liturgical service. This means continually finding ways to honor both Bach’s intentions and current performance trends, as in the nineteenth century performances.

One poignant final example of how the Handel and Haydn Society approached the *St. Matthew Passion* in a reverent way, and in a way that brought it into a more universal context, is through the selection of the final chorus for presentation each time they performed the work. This fact brought great joy to J. S. Dwight, who was saddened by the cuts and especially the removal of the first chorus in the 1871 performance. As the translator for the Ditson publication of the score, which was commissioned and used by the Society, Dwight was extremely familiar with the text of the final chorus:

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Around thy tomb here sit we weeping,
And murmur low, in tone supprest:
Rest Thee softly, rest Thee softly, softly rest!
Long, ye weary limbs, lie sleeping!
This cold stone above Thy head,
Shall to many a care-worn conscience
Be a sweet refreshing pillow;
Here the soul find peaceful bed.
Closed in bliss, divine, slumber now the weary eyes.

But, if we lost the opening, we had the unspeakably beautiful and sacred Schluss-Chor, or concluding double chorus, the parting hymn of the disciples weeping at the Master’s tomb. What other art, what poetry, has ever yet expressed so much of grief, of tender, spiritual love, of faith and peace, of the heart’s heaven smiling through tears, as this tone elegy, – at once an inspiration of profoundest pious feeling, and the ripest masterpiece of complete art.

So should the Passion Music close, and not with fugue of praise and triumph like an oratorio. How easily and evenly the music flows, a broad, rich, deep, pellucid stream, swollen as by countless rills from every loving, bleeding, and believing heart in a redeemed humanity! How full of a sweet secret comfort, even triumph, is this heavenly farewell! It is the ‘peace which passeth understanding.’ ‘Rest Thee, softly!’ is the burthen of the song; one chorus sings it and the other echoes, ‘Softly rest!’ Then both together swell the strain. Many times as this recurs, not only in the voices, but in the introduction and numerous interludes of the exceedingly full orchestra, which sounds as human, sympathetic, and spontaneous as if it too had breath and conscious feeling, you still crave

more of it, for it is as if your soul were bathed in new life inexhaustible . . . This chorus was indeed admirably sung, as if every singer’s heart were in it; and, with eight vocal parts so fully manned, and blended to such purpose by the master soul of polyphony, with such accompaniment of double orchestra and organ, it conveyed a sense of wealth and fullness such as no combination of instruments and voices had ever given us before.”

The *St. Matthew Passion* was indeed unlike any oratorio the Society had sung before in terms of story, text, and difficulty of the music. Both Zerrahn and Dwight recognized the necessity of including this final movement, even though others had to be cut for the first performance in 1871. The story must end somewhere, and it needs to end with hope, as Bach composed. While other movements of the *Passion*, other bits of connection or reflection, could be abandoned without compromising the integrity of the story entirely, this movement provides the audience with a sense of sacred closure after the violence, pain, and agony that had come before. With a chorus of seven hundred and thirty-nine voices in 1871, the beauty and power of this movement were breathtaking, and it is little wonder that Dwight was lavish in his praise. Even if audience members did not resonate with the story behind the music, they could connect with the feelings of grief, tenderness, peace, triumph, and the sense of human loss that comes with the farewell, as Dwight described.

The reviews of the Bethlehem Choral Union’s *St. John Passion* performance also included references to the sacredness of the work:

Thus the story of the ‘Passion’ was told in music well fitted to the solemn theme, save in a few instances where the soloists were given courses in musical gymnastics, but even here the music was wonderful in its beauty. The Choral Union rendered the ‘Passion’ as Bach wrote it and proved quite equal to the task… As usual, the work of the chorus was very superior and showed a keen appreciation of the solemn majesty of the work as well as great musical skill . . . In short, Bach’s ‘Passion,’ as rendered by the Bethlehem Choral Union, was a thorough success and Prof. Wolle and his faithful assistants can feel very

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proud of the first rendition on this continent of this magnificently set story of the ‘Passion’ of our dear Lord Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{344}

The Passion relayed a story that was very familiar to this community, with chorales that had been sung in Moravian churches through the years. In some ways, this piece probably felt like a more grandiose expression of something already known, and the location of the Parochial School Hall rather than Central Moravian Church simply added to the feeling of a universal sacredness and greatness beyond the confines of a sanctuary, inviting people from any background to attend.

The ensembles also found that performance spaces themselves can be transformed through the music. As the sacred works are brought into a secular space, they bring their sacredness with them. The secular space itself, however, broadens the meaning within that sacred work. A sacred sound fuses with the expectations for the secular space, and an unexpected soundscape emerges, creating a “sanctuary” in an unlikely place.\textsuperscript{345} Suddenly everything is expanded—more people feel welcomed, more voices are willing to contribute, and the work is able to reach more people. Bach’s music becomes something for everyone, rather than only for devout Lutherans. This was what the Handel and Haydn Society and the Bethlehem Choral Union accomplished in their performances; they brought Bach’s music to their communities, and introduced the music in a way that all might participate.

Both of these ensembles would continue to perform the Passions up to the present day. The St. Matthew and St. John Passions quickly joined the list of the Handel and Haydn Society’s regularly performed repertoire, and the Bethlehem Choral Union would go on to perform the St.

\textsuperscript{344} “Bach’s ‘Passion,’” \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times} XXII, no. 106, page 1, col. 7.
\textsuperscript{345} For more on the idea of creating a sanctuary in an “everyday” type of place, see McGraw, “Atmosphere as a Concept for Ethnomusicology.”
Matthew Passion in 1892. Fred Wolle was determined to perform the B Minor Mass, as well, but unfortunately arguments over the difficulty of that piece caused the Choral Union to disband; this, however, heralded the beginning of the Bethlehem Bach Choir a few years later, and this group specialized in the large choral-orchestral works of Bach. Indeed, Bethlehem became known as a Bach performance locale; in his article, “Going to Bethlehem,” Charles G. Osgood remarks, “let people judge by what standards they will; but to us whose eyes and feet and ears and hearts turn annually towards old Bethlehem, to find here the high moment of the whole year, this city wears a special and enduring distinction. To her belongs by peculiar right the music of Bach, uttered and imparted to a needy world by the Bach Choir, recreated and realized through the genius of Dr. Wolle.”

Both the Handel and Haydn Society and the Bethlehem Bach Choir are vibrant, well-trained ensembles to this day, and they continue to share the music of Bach with their communities. The Bach Choir is still a volunteer ensemble, though auditions are held each year and the standards are high. The ensemble currently performs works by many composers other than Bach, such as the upcoming performance of Leonard Bernstein’s Mass on March 26, 2017, and holds Bach Festivals each year. These include large works, such as an annual presentation of the B Minor Mass, as well as smaller chamber works. The concerts are performed in diverse locations, from Baker Hall at the Zoellner Arts Center, to the Incarnation of Our Lord Church, to Packer Memorial Church and Peter Hall at Moravian College, to the Gemein Saal in the Moravian Museum, where the Moravians first worshipped in 1742. The festival also includes a series of “Zimmerman’s Coffee House” concerts on the campus of Moravian College, given by

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346 Larson, Bach for One Hundred Years, 36.
The Bach Choir travelled to Germany in 1995 and London for the BBC Proms in 2003, as well as performing at the Kennedy Center and Carnegie Hall. They perform modern works as well as the European classics, and have commissioned works by composers such as Libby Larsen and Stephen Paulus. The current ensemble boasts eighty-four singers: fourteen first sopranos, sixteen second sopranos, thirteen first altos, nine second altos, seven first tenors, eight second tenors, eleven first basses, and six second basses. They are accompanied by the Bach Festival Orchestra.

The Handel and Haydn Society has also continued performing to the present day, and maintains a rigorous performance schedule; the 2016–2017 season includes works such as Bach’s Magnificat, Handel’s Messiah, Monteverdi’s Vespers and Handel’s Semele. Along with regular performances of Bach’s works at Christmas time, the Society still performs the Passions with some regularity; the most recent performance was of the St. John Passion on 11 March and 13 March, 2016, at Symphony Hall, and before that the St. Matthew Passion on 27 March and 29 March, 2015. The Society is not just an oratorio ensemble anymore; they maintain a full orchestra as well as a full chorus, and the orchestra gives concerts of its own such as this season’s lineup of Beethoven’s Eroica, works by Mozart and Haydn, and an Italian Baroque concert featuring concertos by Vivaldi and Locatelli. The chorus is comprised of forty-seven singers: fifteen sopranos, ten altos, twelve tenors, and ten basses (though for some performances, such as Messiah, they use a smaller ensemble). The Chorus is funded in perpetuity, and there are

352 “Bethlehem Bach Festival.”
several endowed chairs (rather than being an all-volunteer ensemble, as in the past). The H&H promotes and uses historically informed performance practice, including historical instruments. There are seventy-six orchestra members, including two recorder players, two viola da gamba players, and two theorbo players. This ensemble is quite different than the seven hundred and thirty-nine member amateur chorus and one hundred and sixteen piece orchestra of the 1871 Bach performance! While they were always a premiere and beloved ensemble, to maintain that status through such substantial growth and change for over two–hundred years is remarkable.

The Bach performance traditions of both ensembles, dating back to the late nineteenth century, have continued because of their dedication to the music and their belief in its importance to modern audiences. People of all backgrounds are welcomed, and Bach’s works now seem to belong to the “universal church,” of which the H&H program notes writer spoke, that all may come, partake in the story, and leave with some type of personal spiritual experience.

The *Passion* performances changed the ensembles, conductors, audiences, and the future of American Bach performance: the ensembles learned to sing more difficult works than ever before; the conductors were tasked with promoting the works to the ensembles and adapting the works somewhat to the audiences’ expectations; the audiences were faced with music they assumed was dry and intellectual but found to be so much more, while American Bach performance was given a precedent of adaptability and diversity. The present-day Handel and Haydn Society and the Bethlehem Bach Choir continue their tradition from years ago of presenting Bach in diverse ways that suit the needs and desires of their communities.

356 “Musicians.”
357 Book of Programs from the Third Triennial Festival, 1874, Notes, p. 27–28, Boston Public Library, Handel and Hayden MS 5084 Box 7, Folder 33, Programs April 1870–December 1874, Courtesy of the Trustees of the BPL/Rare Books.
Numerous Bach festivals and societies around the country also participate in this tradition, with three examples being the Chicago Bach Project, the Oregon Bach Festival, and the Carmel Bach Festival. The Chicago Bach Project currently performs the *Passions*, along with the *B Minor Mass*, in a three-year cycle. Their concerts are held in both in both sacred and secular locations, such as the Harris Theater for Music and Dance, and St. Vincent de Paul’s Church in Chicago. American Bach festivals, such as the Carmel Bach Festival and the Oregon Bach Festival, sprang from the performances of the Choral Union and the Handel and Haydn Society. These festivals adapt the number of the pieces performed, giving all or part of works as needed. The performance locations vary from theaters, to basilicas, to cathedrals. The size of the ensembles, and the use of historically-informed performance practice varies between festivals and years, presenting Bach with either a modern sound or a sound that imagines what Bach himself might have heard.

Because festivals are celebrating Bach’s works and generally use trained singers, the works are most often performed in their original German. The ensemble sizes change with each individual festival, with Carmel and Oregon tending towards fairly large ensembles; none boast the enormous chorus sizes of the early *Passion* performances, however!

A final example from a bit closer to home is the Spring 2017 presentation of the *St. John Passion* by a large ensemble comprised of the Tallahassee Community Chorus, members of the Tallahassee Bach Parley, and Florida State University students, at which I gave a pre-concert talk. This performance combined professionals, students, and community members in a collaborative experience that celebrated Bach’s work with historically informed performance practice and historical instruments. The text was sung in English, and the performance took place

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in Ruby Diamond Concert Hall on Florida State University’s campus. In this, as in all the other Bach presentations discussed, people of any and all spiritual backgrounds could recognize the beauty of Bach’s music and partake in both playing and listening to the works with their own unique perspectives on the sacred content. Because of the precedent set by the Handel and Haydn Society and the Bethlehem Choral Union of inviting, all-encompassing, adaptable *Passion* performance, while still maintaining reverence for the sacred text and Bach’s intentions, Bach’s music thrives today in a diverse range of American performance settings.
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134


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