

The International Bach Academy Stuttgart

Andreas Bomba / Henning Bey / Holger Schneider

Top-class concert experiences and music education
From the Johann Sebastian Bach Summer Academy to the Musikfest Stuttgart
(Stuttgart Music Festival)
(Andreas Bomba)



International Bach Academy (Photo: Holger Schneider)

The summer of 1970 left no outstanding traces in the memory of Baden-Württemberg. Royce Saltzman's visit to Ludwigsburg would also not be worth remembering if it hadn't stimulated musical life in neighboring Stuttgart. By then, however, almost a decade had passed. Saltzman was a professor of choral conducting at the University of Oregon, USA. He mentored some students who had studied abroad at the Eugene University.¹ He also used his stay to visit a church musician in nearby Stuttgart, whose name had caught his ear. It was Helmuth Rilling, who conducted the figural choir and played the organ (which he helped

1 <https://www.dai-tuebingen.de/usa-kontakte/internationale-bachakademie.html>.



Founding of the Gächinger Cantorey in 1954 (Photo: Haberer archive)

construct) in the Memorial Church located in the dignified Stuttgart Halbhöhe residential area. Rilling had just received a professorship in conducting choirs at the Frankfurt Music Academy. Perhaps that was what had piqued the American's curiosity: Rilling was the first person in Germany who was allowed to train choral conductors as their main subject; until then, this activity had only belonged in the canon of school and church music studies.

Rilling's name was already familiar to choral music friends, even beyond his hometown of Stuttgart. He stood for innovation, quality and enthusiasm. In 1954, Rilling founded a choir together with fellow students and good friends in a family friend's weekend home in the Swabian Jura. He named it after this village: »Gächinger Cantorey«. Its members had vocal and instrumental training. They rehearsed intensively, learned quickly and immediately developed a repertoire performed in concerts they organized. The special thing about it: The choir only came together during the holidays and rehearsed on a project-by-project basis. Other vocally talented singers joined. They were checked for their suitability before recording – in short: a procedure common in professional choirs today. At that time, however, the amateur idea dominated German choral music, singing served to socialize and shape the local or church environment. An unquestionably committed leisure activity.



Old and new music



Royce Saltzman (left), Elżbieta Penderecka (right) and Krzysztof Penderecki (second from left) with Helmuth Rilling at the 1998 Oregon Bach Festival (Photo: IBA archive)

Rilling was one of the first persons who wanted more and did so with determination, long before he concentrated on the work of Johann Sebastian Bach and was named »Bach Pope« by the press. The Gächinger choir sang older music as well as new works by leading choral composers of the time, which they were happy to launch, including music by non-German composers.² Radio and disc recordings, concerts at home and abroad raised the choir's name to a quality concept. Rilling benefited from the contacts he had made in his first career as a concert organist. Among his teachers was the luminary Fernando Germani; the Protestant Swabian had dared to become a student with the organist of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome at that time!

It was in this situation that then 42-year-old Royce Saltzman met his colleague, who was five years his junior. A wonderful, lifelong friendship began. Saltzman invited Rilling to Eugene that summer to play the organ and teach choral conducting. Over the years, this resulted in the Oregon Bach Festival, with a professional festival choir and orchestra as well as a typical American university campus at its heart. In 1982, the Hult Center for the Performing Arts opened up new possibilities for the festival with a large concert hall, which, in addition to

² For this: »Sing se noh ...?«. *Festschrift 50 Jahre Gächinger Kantorei (Commemorative publication 50 Years Gächinger Cantorey)*, ed. by Andreas Bomba, Stuttgart 2004.

top-class concerts by its own ensembles, offered a platform for well-known international artists. Furthermore, right from the start there was a broad education program with lecture concerts («Discover Bach»), encounters with artists («Meet the Artist») and master classes for young musicians from the USA, as well as Asian and South American countries. For a few semesters, some of these people followed Rilling to Germany, home of many great composers and classical music culture. Importing the Bach Festival from the American Northwest was therefore an obvious choice.

Turning to Bach

Until then, however, some water would still flow down the Neckar River. First of all, organizational structures were needed to win the Swabians over to such ideas. Rilling benefited from the fact that he and his choirs, which soon included the renowned Frankfurt Cantorey founded by Kurt Thomas, had increasingly turned to the work of Johann Sebastian Bach at the end of the 1960s. In 1969 the Gächingers sang the *h-Moll-Messe (Mass in B minor)* for the first time. The first recording of Bach's cantatas followed in 1970, an undertaking that would blossom into a first complete recording over the course of fifteen years.³ However, at that time, especially in the field of older music, things started to move. Historical performance practice posed other questions, set new standards and promoted professionalization (which economically necessitated the miniaturization of the medium). This resulted in new ensemble structures – in Stuttgart, for example, by the chamber choir founded in 1968 by Frieder Bernius, a former Gächinger.⁴

In the media, Rilling was initially overshadowed by the conductor Karl Richter, who worked in Munich. Richter cultivated a rather emotional, even monumental style. After his death in February 1981, the school around Nikolaus Harnoncourt and various artists from England and the Netherlands gained in importance, also due to a new recording medium, the CD, which required new digital recordings of the relevant repertoire. The choral scene began to look beyond the borders to Scandinavia and the Baltic States to discover new types of choral music, interpretation and tonal design. German Choir Competitions (since 1982) proclaimed by the German Music Council did their part to upgrade choral music, promote interest and stimulate performance awareness as well as give space to new ideas.

3 First, a series of rarely performed cantatas was planned for the Munich Claudius publishing house. Neuhauser publisher Friedrich Hänssler took over this project after a few years to make a complete recording during the 1985 Bach anniversary year. Ten years later, it formed the basis for the *edition bachakademie (Bach Academy edition)*, the first complete recording of Johann Sebastian Bach's music, released in 2000.

4 The commemorative publication *50 Jahre Kammerchor Stuttgart (50 Years of the Chamber Choir Stuttgart)*, ed. by the friends of the Musik Podium Stuttgart e. V., Stuttgart 2018.



In general, musical life experienced a stormy departure. The promotion of young talents through the ›Jugend musiziert‹ (›Youth Making Music‹) competition bore fruit; many young people risked the existence of a free musical life instead of pursuing a secondary day job, as they did twenty years earlier. Accordingly, the numerous music academies in Germany expanded their range of free courses; the economic prosperity of Germany as a cultural location attracted students from all over the world. Special ensembles for old and new music emerged, new concert halls were built. From the mid-1980s, a festival boom complemented traditional festivals such as those at Ludwigsburg and Schwetzingen in Baden-Württemberg. Its attraction consisted in offering concerts in many places that had previously been inaccessible to the music industry. This gave rise to new formats and a new audience, which were able to free themselves from the formal constraints of the city's opera and concert business.⁵

The Johann Sebastian Bach Summer Academy

Stuttgart's contribution to this awakening in German musical life was the Johann Sebastian Bach Summer Academy, held for the first time in 1979. It preceded the aforementioned new festivals and considered itself more as a comprehensive learning and hands-on offer. It required founding a sponsoring association for the Gächinger Cantorey, Bach Collegium Stuttgart (orchestra) and other activities of Helmuth Rilling. In 1973, this Stuttgart concert association was able to win a congenial managing director in Andreas Keller. The son of the Stuttgart organ professor and Bach researcher Hermann Keller (with whom Rilling had also studied) actively developed sustainable structures, relied on EDP-supported forms of organization early on and helped attract the Stuttgart citizenship, companies from the Middle Neckar economic area and state politicians to Helmuth Rilling's work. Similar to the Stuttgart Ballet, the conductor's name began to develop into a trademark of Baden-Württemberg culture, with which the state could be represented worldwide.

The summer academy followed the pattern proven in Eugene, Oregon. At first, a comparably smaller place outside the state capital was sought and the old imperial city of Esslingen am Neckar was targeted. Ultimately, however, the Hospitalhof (ancient hospital, now a Protestant educational centre) grounds in the center of Stuttgart functioned as a campus, with adjoining halls, rehearsal space and course rooms as well as a small church. In the years that followed, other places

5 Franz Willnauer explains this in detail: »Festspiele und Musikfestivals« (»Festivals and Music Festivals«), in: *Musikleben in Deutschland (Musical Life in Germany)*, ed. by German Music Council, editors: Christiane Schwerdtfeger, Bonn 2019, pp. 300–327. In the table compiled on page 314, the Europäisches Musikfest Stuttgart (Stuttgart European Music Festival) (see below), held for the first time in 1985, ranked first out of 80 music festivals founded, which in turn are only a selection (2020, before Corona) of the around 600 estimated number of festivals in the field of (largely) classical music.

were added with the collegiate church and the halls of the nearby Liederhalle, which could accommodate the rush of the public. An academy in the middle of the summer, when institutional musical life was on hold, was a plan that should work out perfectly.

Bach cantatas in the center

The framework of the summer academy was formed by Bach's cantatas; a total of ten cantatas were worked on every day for two weeks from Monday to Friday. Leading soloists from Rilling's cantata recording series gave singing and instrumental courses.⁶ At the same time, the *Neue Bachausgabe* (*New Bach Edition*) was being created at Bach Institutes in Göttingen and Leipzig with the aim of publishing a reliable, state-of-the-art musical text. Leading Bach researchers came to Stuttgart to introduce students to their work, i.e. research, teaching and interpretation all in one. The interested audience was allowed to follow the whole event as part of a general study. Above all, questions of performance practice were discussed, such as basso continuo instrumentation, use of outmoded instruments, as well as musical articulation and rhetoric. Importance was also attached to the music's spiritual origin and message; after all, Bach composed his cantatas as a kind of sermon music for church services. With the musically experienced pastor of the Stuttgart Memorial Church, Peter Kreyszig, a theologian could be won who knew how to combine Bach's music and the texts he set to music with questions of present, everyday life.⁷

After individual course work for soloists and conductors, the entire ensemble rehearsed in the afternoon. Later, the entire auditorium moved from the Hospitalhof to the collegiate church, about 500 meters away, where Helmuth Rilling introduced Bach's music in the form of a lecture concert before the cantata performance. Care was taken to involve as many course participants as possible in the performance. Sometimes another evening concert rounded off the musical day; oratorio performances on the weekends formed an attractive setting.

Works by other composers

With the second edition in 1980, the Summer Academy began to combine Bach's cantata music with works by other composers: Bach family members were followed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in 1981, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy in

6 The following basic information is taken from almanacs and journals published for the summer academies, later music festivals, as well as program books and brochures (all in the Bach Academy's archives), as well as personal memoirs and notes of the author and people involved in the events.

7 Peter Kreyszig: *Auskunft über den Glauben. Predigten 1965–1993 (Information about faith. Sermons 1965–1993)* (= *International Stuttgart Bach Academy publication series 6*), Kassel et al 1993.



1982, Johannes Brahms in 1983 and the Catholic composers Anton Bruckner and Max Reger in 1984. The concert program around the core work with Bach's cantatas, expanded and in this respect not only changed the academy's character, but also appealed to additional audiences.

In the meantime, the event's sponsorship passed to the International Bach Academy Stuttgart, founded in 1981. This institute represented the stability Rilling's company had gained in the meantime. In the manner of a private music college, courses on specific topics were held throughout the year; with the help of private sponsors, a former publishing house with a concert hall was acquired in western Stuttgart. The city's pride manifested in renaming the square at the beginning of the Hasenbergsteige to Johann-Sebastian-Bach-Platz, which was personally bestowed by the Lord Mayor of Stuttgart and is still the address of the Bach Academy today.

The International Music Festival

In 1985, the music world commemorated prominent anniversaries of well-known composers from German-speaking countries: 400 years of Heinrich Schütz, 300 years each of Johann Sebastian Bach and Georg Friedrich Handel, 100 years of Alban Berg. A reason for the German Music Council to proclaim a year of music. It assigned the central event to Stuttgart, in the organizational hands of the International Bach Academy. The summer academy, whose course and educational program remained essentially the same under the title »Bach und das 20. Jahrhundert« (»Bach and the 20th Century«) was expanded for the first time into a music festival, the International Stuttgart Music Festival. The Federal President spoke at the ceremony; Richard von Weizsäcker, a native of Stuttgart, had started a lively debate three months earlier with his speech on the liberation of Germany from National Socialism. Newly discovered works by the aforementioned composers, such as the so-called *Schwanengesang* (*Swan Song*) by Heinrich Schütz, were also premiered in numerous top-class concerts. Wolfgang Hildesheimer spoke about the »distant Bach,«⁸ the much-noticed exhibition »300 Years of Johann Sebastian Bach« curated by the Academic Director of the Bach Academy Ulrich Prinz, and exhibited manuscripts, documents and historical musical instruments on loan from all over the world⁹. At the end, the Second German Television Channel staged a tour of Johann Sebastian Bach's life and work, with live overlays of several concerts taking place simultaneously in Stuttgart.

8 Wolfgang Hildesheimer: *Der ferne Bach (The Distant Bach)* (= *insel-Bücherei* 1025), Frankfurt 1985.

9 *300 Jahre Johann Sebastian Bach* [...], Ausstellung der Internationalen Bachakademie in der Staatsgalerie Stuttgart (*300 Years of Johann Sebastian Bach* [...], exhibition of the International Bach Academy in the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart), 09.14 to 10.27.1985, catalog, ed. by Ulrich Prinz, Tutzing 1985.



House opening in 1985 with Federal President Richard von Weizsäcker, Andreas Keller and Helmuth Rilling (from left to right; photo: IBA archive)

Overwhelming success encouraged the Bach Academy to alternate the music festival with the summer academy every two or three years and brand it as a »European Music Festival«. The academies changed their thematic focus from composers to individual countries and their local reception of Bach. In 1987, the focus was on music from Czechoslovakia, the previous year the music history of Italy had been explored under the title »Von Monteverdi bis Verdi« (»From Monteverdi to Verdi«). An international congress brought a small sensation to light: the setting of the Requiem text that Giuseppe Verdi commissioned from various Italian colleagues in 1868 after the death of composer Gioachino Rossini. The work was never performed, but the manuscripts were still kept by the Milanese publishing house Ricordi.¹⁰

¹⁰ *Messa per Rossini. Geschichte, Quellen, Musik (History, Sources, Music)* (= *International Stuttgart Bach Academy publication series 1*), ed. by Ulrich Prinz, Stuttgart 1988.



The European Music Festival 1988

The first performance of this *Messa per Rossini* was the focus of the following music festival – a sensation. Helmuth Rilling and his ensembles were then invited to Italy and New York to present this unknown work there. Verdi had contributed the final movement; this »Libera me, Domine« (»Set Me Free, Lord«) was included a few years later in his famous *Requiem* on the death of the Risorgimento poet Carlo Manzoni. Most of the other Rossini Requiem composers had fallen into oblivion outside of Italy; the premiere of their collective composition, which was extremely heterogeneous in its individual parts, primarily illuminated the extremely lively scene of church music in Italy in the 19th century: Music outside the opera.

In years that followed, special aspects of Johann Sebastian Bach's work were brought into focus, as well as current questions of musicological discourse, which could be presented in concert programs as examples. In 1989 the summer academy was devoted to the question of the special features of Bach's late work, with focus on the *Mass in B minor* and in relation to the late work of Ludwig van Beethoven. In 1990, focus was on the *Johannes-Passion (St. John Passion)* and »Sei solo«, i. e. Bach's sonatas and partitas for solo violin. With the Rostock Motettenchor, a church ensemble from the (then still existing) GDR made a guest appearance for the first time; Helmuth Rilling had been friends with the local cantor Hartwig Eschenburg for decades and had already been able to undertake a concert tour to the Baltic Sea with the Gächingers in 1984.

The exciting 1990's

The Bach Academy stuck to the tradition of offering daily top-class lectures by well-known lecturers and academics in addition to its concert, course and educational program. Many of these lectures were subsequently printed in thematically bundled collections of essays in the *Schriftenreihe der Internationalen Bachakademie Stuttgart (International Stuttgart Bach Academy publication series)*. At one of these events, people from Stuttgart met the American pianist Robert Levin, Harvard professor as well as Bach and Mozart scholar. He was commissioned to complete Mozart's *Requiem*, which had survived in fragmentary form, for the music festival in the Mozart commemorative year 1991. An entire music festival theme had been even devoted to the fragment idea: »Mozart – Schubert. Fragment des Werks, Fragment des Lebens?« (»Fragment of Work, Fragment of Life?«) Another completed fragment, the completion of Franz Schubert's *Lazarus Oratorio* by Edison Denisov, was premiered a few years later as part of the Bach Academy's concert series.

The 1993 European Music Festival followed current political developments: »Europas Musikgeschichte – Grenzen und Öffnungen« (»Europe's Music History – Borders and Openings«), again with an international congress. In between, two summer academies dealt with the traces of great biblical figures in music history:



Helmut Rilling, 2006 (Photo: Holger Schneider)

King David (1992) and *Elijah* (1994). This also established the two-year alternation between a summer academy, in the proven format with courses and moderation in the center, and the music festival, which is more concert-oriented.

1995: War – Reconciliation – Peace

Focus of this European music festival was the premiere of a full-length piece called *Requiem der Versöhnung (Requiem of Reconciliation)*. Following the idea of Giuseppe Verdi and his funeral mass for Gioachino Rossini, the Bach Academy commissioned a setting of this text from a total of 14 composers to commemorate victims of the Second World War, which ended fifty years before. The composers represented those countries that suffered particularly badly from the war started by Germany. They divided individual sections of text among themselves; the intention was deliberately to create a stylistically free and therefore very heterogeneous work. Friedrich Cerha (Austria) took over »Introitus« and »Kyrie«. Paul-Heinz Dittrich (Germany, »Dies irae«), Marek Kopelent (Czech Republic, »Judex ergo«), John Harbison (USA, »Juste judex«) and Arne Nordheim (Norway, »Confutatis«). An »Interlude« composed by Bernard Rands (Great Britain/USA) followed. Marc-André Dalbavie (France) took over the »Offertorium«, Judith Weir



(Great Britain) the »Sanctus« and Krzysztof Penderecki (Poland) the »Agnus Dei«. The Communio »Lux aeterna luceat eis« was set to music twice, once by Wolfgang Rihm (Germany) and jointly by the two Russians Alfred Schnittke and Gennadi Roshdestwenski. Finally, Joji Yuasa (Japan) could be won for the responsory »Liberate me, Domine«.

A prologue to a Paul Celan text by Luciano Berio (Italy) and an epilog, for which the Hungarian-born György Kurtág set a text found on a tombstone in Cornwall to music, formed the framework for this piece, which appeals to the reconciliation of peoples. In addition to the Gächinger Cantorey and the Krakow Chamber Choir, six well-known vocal soloists, including the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, performed on August 16, 1995, in the Stuttgart Liederhalle. Rilling and the Bach Academy have maintained a close relationship with this orchestra since the 1970s; after 1945, Rilling was the first German conductor who was allowed to perform with his choir and this orchestra in Israel.

This effort was followed again in 1996 by a summer academy. Under the title »Concertmeister – Cantor – Capellmeister« (»Concertmaster – Cantor – Bandmaster«) it was devoted to three phases in the life and work of Johann Sebastian Bach. A look at this academy's daily routine shows the structure of the proven event format had changed very little: Master classes, rehearsals, lectures, artist talks and seminars in the mornings and afternoons, every two days in the evenings a lecture concert, this time on the subject of the *Weihnachts-Oratorium* (*Christmas Oratorio*). The concert side was strengthened by formats such as one-hour midday or night concerts at 1 p. m. or 10 p. m. – quite unusual starting times, but popular with the audience.

Paths to Romance

This was the motto of the 1997 European Music Festival. The music program was based on Ludwig van Beethoven (Helmuth Rilling: »He opens the door to an age of self-determination«) and led via Mendelssohn's oratorios to world premieres by Marc-André Dalbavie and Joji Yuasa, who two years earlier had also contributed to the *Requiem of Reconciliation*, and which were based on Romantic themes. Well-known guest ensembles delighted the audience, lunchtime and nighttime concerts revolved around the leading instrument of the 19th century, the piano, and the main contribution of the Romantic era to musical literature: the song. Cooperation with the Stuttgart Hugo Wolf Academy signaled future options for music festivals: to bundle and present the strengths of musical institutions in Stuttgart.

Two more summer academies followed, the last of their kind. From 2000, an annual music festival was to focus media attention on this brand, while the actual course and academy work would be continued with a Stuttgart Bach Week from 1999 in spring. The 1998 Summer Academy placed works by Mozart, Bach, Max Reger and Viktor Ullmann in relation to one another; the performance of the

opera *Der Kaiser von Atlantis (The Emperor of Atlantis)* by the Jewish composer Ullmann, who was murdered in the Auschwitz concentration camp, caused a stir.¹¹ For the first time, representatives of Bach academies, which Rilling and the Bach Academy had founded and organized in previous years, mainly in Eastern European countries, met on the sidelines. The focus was on exchanging experiences and perspectives, which were to bear fruit three years later. The last summer academy in 1999 dealt with the triad »Schöpfung – Passion – Auferstehung« (»Creation – Passion – Resurrection«); twenty years after the first implementation, one could look back on hundreds of course participants from more than 40 countries, around 150 lecturers and more than 900,000 visitors. Almost 20 new compositions had been premiered during this period. With portrait concerts by four contemporary composers, the 2000 music festival planned for the millennium year loomed large on the horizon.

Passion 2000

Among the numerous events and festivals dedicated to the 250th anniversary of Johann Sebastian Bach's death, the Bach Academy certainly hit the absolute pinnacle: four new Passion settings by composers from four cultural circles, sold-out concert halls and four live broadcasts on radio and television. Andreas Keller's idea obviously hit the nerve of this special anniversary and turning point year. Wolfgang Rihm composed *Passionsstücke nach Lukas (Passion Pieces According to Luke)*; Rilling conducted the premiere with the Gächinger Cantorey and the Stuttgart Bach Collegium. Sofia Gubaidulina dedicated herself to the Passion based on the evangelist Johannes; Valery Gergiev with the choir and orchestra of the St. Petersburg Mariinsky Theater traveled to Stuttgart. Jewish Argentinian Osvaldo Golijov wrote a folkloric and dance-tinged *Pasión segun San Marcos (Passion According to St. Mark)*, launched by the Schola Cantorum de Caracas and the Orquesta La Pasión conducted by Maria Guinand. Finally, Chinese composer Tan Dun, who lives in New York, called his piece *Water Passion*, which is based on the text of Matthew and also plays with optical effects, sung by soloists and the RIAS Chamber Choir under his direction. The music festival's course program was dedicated to the two Bach passions; string quartets by Beethoven and Bartók set a counterpoint in the night concerts. With unmistakable pride in so much creativity and charisma, The Prime Minister of Baden-Württemberg, Erwin Teufel, awarded the Bach Academy's Managing Director, Andreas Keller, the honorary title of Artistic Director.

11 On the composer and work in detail: Viktor Ullmann. *Beiträge, Programme, Dokumente, Materialien; Veranstaltungen in der Sommerakademie Johann Sebastian Bach, Stuttgart 1998 (Contributions, Programs, Documents, Materials; Events in the Johann Sebastian Bach Summer Academy, Stuttgart 1998)* (= *International Stuttgart Bach Academy publication series 9*), editors: Christian Eisert and Ulrich Prinz, Kassel et al. 1998.



Wolfgang Rihm and Helmuth Rilling during the *Passion 2000* rehearsals (Photo: IBA archive)

As a novelty for the following years, the Stuttgart European Music Festival presented a new ensemble in 2001. Stimulated by Helmuth Rilling's international network and the Bach Academies organized around the world, young people from many countries qualified to take part in a »Festival Choir and Orchestra«. Under the guidance of renowned university teachers, the ensemble rehearsed large-scale oratorios during a working phase in Salem Castle on Lake Constance, as well as other choir and orchestra programs. The round dance began with Giuseppe Verdi's *Requiem*, the *Messa per Rossini* was also resumed and the entire program was dedicated to well-known and less well-known Italian music. In addition to daily lectures, there were guided tours in the State Gallery and a series of Italian films in the municipal cinema – another step towards networking different cultural institutions in Stuttgart.

The »Stuttgart Sound« at the music festival

From 1998 to 2011, Sir Roger Norrington conducted the Stuttgart-based SWR Radio Symphony Orchestra. The Brit had made a name for himself with the Schütz Choir of London and the London Classical Players since the 1980s. His musical style was based on historical performance practice knowledge. In relation to the symphony orchestra, this meant: a smaller cast, precise balancing of strings and wind instruments that flowed into the orchestral composition, and above all non-

vibrato playing, also for the literature of the 19th century. Norrington argued that phonograph recording technology brought about vibrato, which had become the norm in the 20th century.

Conductors Helmuth Rilling and Sir Roger Norrington, who were almost the same age, had known each other for a long time. What could be more obvious than to intensify this cooperation in Stuttgart? The radio symphony orchestra, under the direction of its chief conductor, prepared every two years for the music festival all of Ludwig van Beethoven's symphonies (2002), four symphonies by Mendelssohn and Schumann (2004) and selected symphonies by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (2006) in the »Stuttgart Sound«. Rilling's festival ensemble added the great oratorios by these composers; in the interim years, young musicians worked on Johannes Brahms's *Ein Deutsches Requiem (A German Requiem)* and Gustav Mahler's *2. Sinfonie (2nd Symphony)* (2003) for the music festival »Bach im 21. Jahrhundert« (»Bach in the 21st Century«) (2005), Bach's *Mass in B minor* for a film project with live music and finally, under the motto of the music festival »Stürmisch bewegt« (»Moving Stormily«), Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* and Mahler's *5. Sinfonie (5th Symphony)* 2007.

During this phase, cooperation partnerships expanded to include the Stuttgart theater, ballet and jazz projects as well as the entire church music scene in Stuttgart, for which the Bach Academy enabled a complete performance of Mozart's church music at the music festival in the Mozart commemorative year 2006. Reconstructions and completions of Mozart's *Requiem* and *c-Moll-Messe (C minor Mass)* by American pianist and musicologist Robert Levin were also performed as part of this music festival. Diverse concerts with chamber, piano and choral music; master classes; lectures and guided tours related to the main pillars of these music festivals kept alive the basic format of the music festival, which is aimed at mediation and a holistic cultural experience.

Change in the Bach Academy management

After the music festival in 2007, founding manager and director of the Bach Academy, Andreas Keller, retired. Discussions about the Academy management's successor also increased; after all, Helmuth Rilling, a charismatic authority, especially among young musicians, was already 75 years old. Christian Lorenz, until then director of the Südwestdeutsche Philharmonie Konstanz, was appointed as Keller's successor. What was particularly important to him was reorienting the event, which was now only known as the »Stuttgart Music Festival,« the principle of which was also called into question. As the *Stuttgarter Nachrichten* newspaper observed, the focus of the Bach Academy's work was to be shifted »from musicology to music education and mediation«: »The first thing to note is the dilemma of the director, who has to do one thing to ensure that his house survives, but must not (yet) leave the other. The old academy perishes almost imperceptibly – and from its ashes rises: a concert promoter.«



In 2008 the motto of the music festival was »Vollendet unvollendet« (»Perfectly Uncompleted«). It returned to the roots once more: Works by Johann Sebastian Bach were the focus of the work with the festival ensemble *Matthäus-Passion* (*St. Matthew Passion*), plus the *Kunst der Fuge* (*Art of Fugue*), Franz Schubert's *Unvollendete Sinfonie* (*Unfinished Symphony*), Max Reger's *Requiem*, as well as »finished« masterpieces such as Bach's *Goldberg-Variationen* (*Goldberg Variations*) and the enigmatic *Musikalische Opfer* (*Musical Offerings*), to which the Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra contributed the rarely heard *Offrande musicale* by Alsatian composer Charles Koechlin.

In the following years, the handwriting of the new artistic director and his dramaturge Michael Gassmann became more noticeable. The Bach Academy saw itself in the tension between the idea of a summer academy with a clearly defined group of participants and the actually existing large European Music Festival with a broad program for an equally broad audience. It therefore took a third path »from the motto to the topic«. Themes for 2009, 2010 and 2011 were »Light«, »Night« and »Water«. In 2012, in Christian Lorenz's last year in office (because the artistic director contract was not renewed), the topic of »Faith« followed.¹² Participation in a large festival ensemble was last advertized in 2009. It rehearsed Handel's oratorio *Messiah* under Helmuth Rilling's direction and, as a kind of contemporary counterpoint, a composition by the Swede Sven-David Sandström on the same text. After a one-year break, on a smaller scale, but still internationally formed from 2011 the »JSB Ensemble« – the initials of the composer can also be used as »Junges Stuttgarter Bach« (»Young Stuttgart Bach«) Ensemble – the core of the Bach Week, now takes place in spring, in the context of Bach's birthday on March 21, at the Stuttgart Conservatory.

Thus, in a sense it was a return to basics. The Bach Week and Music Festival were continued by Hans-Christoph Rademann after he replaced Helmuth Rilling as Bach Academy Director in 2013. Since the first summer academy in 1979, Stuttgart Music Festival activities have continuously developed over almost 35 years. Combining top-class concert experiences with music education, hands-on offers, a family relationship with participating artists and monitoring the rehearsal process, to make it more sustainable – this idea has only found a few imitators in the German festival landscape. Or the other way around: The music city Stuttgart, which likes to hide its light under a bushel, has managed to preserve a special, independent identity with the help of the International Bach Academy's music festival.

12 The last volume of the publication series was released for this purpose: *Der eine Gott und die Vielfalt der Klänge. Sakrale Musik der drei monotheistischen Religionen* (*The one God and the variety of sounds. Sacred Music of the Three Monotheistic Religions*) (= *International Stuttgart Bach Academy publication series 18*), ed. by Michael Gassmann, Kassel et al 2013.



›Change of baton‹ between Helmuth Rilling and Hans-Christoph Rademann in the presence of Federal President Joachim Gauck on August 24, 2013, in the Stuttgart Liederhalle (Photo: Holger Schneider)

A unique competence center (Henning Bey)

At the Stuttgart Music Festival 2013 – which was clearly dedicated to the topic of »Neugier« (»Curiosity«), the change of baton from Rilling to Rademann took place on the Liederhalle stage as part of a festive concert in the presence of none other than Federal President Joachim Gauck. Both the old and the new director of the academy conducted the Bach Academy's own ensembles with a cantata by Johann



Sebastian Bach that evening. Helmuth Rilling chose the cantata *Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben (Heart and Mouth and Deed and Life)* BWV 147 for this occasion; Hans-Christoph Rademann then introduced himself to the Stuttgart audience as the new Bach Academy Director with the cantata *O ewiges Feuer, O Ursprung der Liebe (O Eternal Fire, O Source of Love)* BWV 34. A great era ended and a new one began.

Of course, Rademann wanted to continue the tradition of a unique competence center, from which numerous young musicians have received decisive impulses on their way to the top class in recent decades. However, as his inaugural concert at the 2013 Stuttgart Music Festival already showed, historical performance practice – in the company's own ensembles as well as in educational mediation – should now form the heart of a reformed Bach Academy. Here Rademann took a different path than Helmuth Rilling, for whom this type of musical approach played no role. The new director of the academy approached his reform project step by step over the next few years, starting with the in-house sound culture. As mentioned in the review of the inaugural concert, in the next concerts with the Stuttgart Bach Collegium he played more transparently, more rhetorically, with the ideal of an original instrumental sound in mind. The Gächinger Cantorey was slimmed down in the cast, an internal audition of all singers brought out a finer internal tuning together with greater musical flexibility and raised the orchestra to a higher level.

In 2014, back at the music festival, the next step followed: With the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra (FBO), for the first time an ensemble playing on original instruments was elected Orchestra in Residence, which not only presented itself in concerts, but also was available to the »Musikfest-Akademie« (»Music Festival Academy«) with young musicians of the vocal master classes and conducting course.

In January 2015 another stage of the new path followed. With Johann Sebastian Bach's *Mass in B minor*, selected vocal soloists, the Gächinger Cantorey and again the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra. Four concerts in Berlin, Freiburg and Stuttgart were followed by a CD recording on the Stuttgart Carus label, which adopted the latest findings of Bach research. The Kyrie and Gloria were based for the first time on the original performance material, the so-called »Dresdner Stimmen« (»Dresden Parts«) prepared by Bach in 1733 for the Saxony Electoral Prince. For Rademann, historical performance practice meant something discursive, not dogmatically fixed, which entails a constant exchange. For this reason, when he took office at the International Bach Academy, a new concert series was created at the music festival entitled »Sichten auf Bach« (»Views on Bach«), which invited performers from all over the world to Stuttgart to present ›their‹ Bach in concert – alongside the Bach Academy ensembles. Renowned artists such as Václav Luks with his Collegium 1704, Jos van Veldhoven and De Nederlandse Bachvereniging, Sigiswald Kuijken and La Petite Bande, cellist Jan Vogler, Konrad



Hans-Christoph Rademann, 2022 (Photo: Holger Schneider)

Junghänel and Cantus Cölln, Freiburg BarockConsort, Stephan MacLeod and Gli Angeli Genève, harpsichordist Andreas Staier, Keller Quartet, Sergey Malov with his violoncello da Spalla, Alexander Grychtolik and Deutsche Hofmusik have so far presented their business cards in the series. At the 2018 Music Festival, Ton Koopman and Amsterdam Baroque Choir & Orchestra, Hermann Max and his Rheinische Cantorey with *Das kleine Konzert*, Thomaskantor Gotthold Schwarz with Thomanerchor and Saxon Baroque Orchestra as well as Jörg Halubek and his *Il Gusto Barocco* presented their »Sichten auf Bach.«

The unique project »BachBewegt!Tanz!« (»BachMoves!Dance!«) which, under the musical direction of Hans-Christoph Rademann and under the leadership of his wife, choreographer Friederike Rademann, enriched the Bach Academy's work from 2013. Every year, 100 children from different schools and social environments experienced the relevance and power of Johann Sebastian Bach's music by learning, under the guidance of Friederike Rademann and her team, how to dance the choreograph of individual major works by the Thomaskantor (*Christmas Oratorio*, *Magnificat*, *3rd Orchestral Suite*) or his contemporaries – Vivaldi's *Vier Jahreszeiten* (*Four Seasons*). To be sure, in cooperation with the Bach Academy ensembles and top-class vocal soloists. Such a project with the interaction of children and professionals was quite unique. »Bach's music has to go through the body,« demanded Hans-Christoph Rademann, bringing the momentum and timeless impact of early music barrier-free into our time. A literally moving project, the



Performance »BachBewegt!Tanz!« – »Zweifelmüt« (»Courage in Despair«) in February 2022 in Ludwigsburg (Photo: Holger Schneider)

first highlight of which was undoubtedly the danced performance and DVD recording of Bach's *Matthew Passion* in 2017.

Incidentally, the same idea lies in a sibling format of »BachBewegt!Tanz!«, namely the youth project »BachBewegt!Singen!« (»BachMoves!Sing!«). Here, too, children are involved in a professional production with their own potential: An oratorical work is on the program, arranged by the composer Karsten Gundermann and rehearsed with the Bach Academy ensembles and a huge children's choir. In the concert, the work is first heard in an arrangement, and then the original is performed. In this way, children first experience the work of art as the performing artist in their own version (the original melodies and themes from the template can also be found in the adaptation) and can then follow the work in its original form by listening, because they are familiar with its structure from their own work.

In the »Bach Academy 2.0« by Hans-Christoph Rademann, dance and song are the motor to bring Bach's music closer to young people. These steps towards a modern competence center for oratorio and sacred music characterize a very own, modern understanding of music and are just as significant as the reformation of the Bach Academy's own orchestra. This is now progressing with undiminished vigor. After joint projects with the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra and a *St. John Passion* with the Academy for Early Music Berlin, the completely reformed Bach Academy ensembles saw the light of day at the 2016 Stuttgart Music

Festival: Under the common name »Gaechinger Cantorey,« the newly formed choir was combined with a newly founded baroque orchestra on original instruments, which was made up of top international musicians. This was not just a matter of founding a new ensemble, but of musically realizing a concept in terms of content. There was a clear goal behind this tonal realignment of the Bach Academy ensembles. »Internationally there is a Dutch Bach style, an English Bach style, and the French also have their own style of Bach interpretation. But a clearly audible German Bach style has been missing in the European music scene. »This is where I would like to start and bring the Central German Bach sound (the musical breeding ground for Bach's music) to life with Stuttgart means. That's why I call my style ideal the ›Stuttgart Bach style‹ of the Bach Academy ensembles,« explains Hans-Christoph Rademann.

The first big milestone was set – the newly formed Bach Academy ensembles arrived in Stuttgart with the new Silbermann chest. And the public noted that this sound reformation represented a significant step towards a modernized center of excellence for performance practice, as a review of the 2016 music festival in the press showed:

»The sound of Bach cantatas in the collegiate church, new playing on old instruments and in historically informed performance practice had their own character; the orchestra and choir are excellently cast, and so what Helmuth Rilling's successor, who has been in office since 2013, dreams of could actually emerge in Stuttgart: an institution that comes as close as possible to the sound of Bach's time. Research and practice, music education and concert events bring together in a lively way, a Bach center based on a central German baroque sound ideal which can make the Stuttgart house a brand.«¹³

On the international CD market, Hans-Christoph Rademann and his reformed Gaechinger Cantorey deliberately speak in the 2017 Reformation Year with a recording of reformation cantatas and a »Lutheran« mass by Johann Sebastian Bach. A musical success that is flanked by the first major foreign tour of the ensembles, with six successful concerts in the USA.

13 Susanne Benda, *Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, September 9, 2016.



VISION.BACH on the horizon

(Holger Schneider)

In spring 2018, the ensembles, with works by the Thomaskantor in their luggage, embarked on the second major South American tour¹⁴ under Rademann's direction; immediately afterwards, the Gaechinger Cantorey presented itself with its conductor of the international Bach community in the prominent »Leipziger Kantaten-Ring« (»Leipzig Cantata Ring«) at the Bach Festival. With bravura and subsequent invitations to the Bach city No. 1.

For the last time, 2018 Stuttgart Music Festival took place in late summer, a time before the start of the regular concert season, partly during the holidays: The Bach Academy's music festival has so far stood¹⁵ erratically in the musical events of the city, which have been dormant for this time, which, however, made cooperation with other organizers difficult or impossible. That changed with the next music festival, which was suspended in 2019 and moved to the time after Whitsun in June 2020. Later, tailor-made cooperations were planned with Stuttgart's cultural institutions, including the State Opera, Stuttgart Philharmonic and SWR Symphony Orchestra, in order to let the music festival radiate far beyond the city as a living image of Stuttgart's great musical life. In addition to the »Sichten auf Bach,« which was meanwhile attended by a large part of the Bach world elite in Stuttgart, the concert series »Unternehmen Musik« (»Business Music«) established itself as another formative constant of the festival: Open-air performances in the courtyard of the Klett Group in the west of Stuttgart, crossover highlights in the grandiose atrium of the Mercedes-Benz Museum, performances in the auditoriums of the Trumpf or Kärcher companies combine music and Swabian entrepreneurship with that certain »Bach Academy« self-image that isn't only able to reconcile both »sides of the coin« in a pleasant way, but also provides thematic particularly multicolored festival touches.

Rademann's intuition for Bach's music also looked for places beyond the Stuttgart Liederhalle. After a concert in autumn 2017 in the Naumburg town church of St. Wenzel, another concert was scheduled for autumn 2018: In this church is the organ made by Zacharias Hildebrandt, which Bach had inspected on September 27, 1746, together with his teacher Gottfried Silbermann. The idea of performing Bach at historical Bach sites with a large church organ located there (an aspect that has meanwhile become established in performance practice) not only leads to an extraordinary sound event on site,¹⁶ but also to another important CD re-

14 Seven concerts in Bogotá, Buenos Aires (2x), Lima, Montevideo, Rio de Janeiro and Santiago de Chile.

15 Themes: 2014 »Origin«, 2015 »Friendship«, 2016 »Wealth«, 2017 »Freedom«, 2018 »War and Peace«.

16 September 29, 2018, Naumburg, St. Wenzel town church: J. S. Bach, Cantatas *Es erhuh sich ein Streit* (A Dispute Arose) (BWV 19), *Gott soll allein mein Herze haben* (God Alone Shall Have My Heart) (BWV 169), *Der Friede sei mit dir* (Peace Be with You) (BWV 158) and *Man singet mit Freuden vom Sieg* (One Sings with Joy About Victory) (BWV 149).

ording (»Stay, ye Angels«) by Accentus Music. In following years, Bach's two great passions were released under this label and by Carus-Verlag, along with other recordings.¹⁷ The name Gottfried Silbermann is also directly linked to the profile of the Gaechinger Cantorey. The tonal backbone of the instrumental ensemble is embodied by two replicas of original instruments from the workshop of the legendary Bach contemporaries commissioned by the Bach Academy: the replica of a chest organ by Silbermann previously discovered in Seerhausen, Saxony, which has belonged to the ensemble since 2016, and the replica of a Silbermann harpsichord, which completes the ensemble since 2021.

In September 2018, Katrin Zagrosek, previously director of the Niedersächsische Musiktage, became the managing director of the International Bach Academy in Stuttgart. She was the successor to Gernot Rehrl, who, together with Hans-Christoph Rademann, promoted and further developed the reprofiling of the facility and the ensembles with verve and prudence for more than half a decade. For the first time in 2019, the newly designed Bach Week placed the music of Johann Sebastian Bach in an evocative dialog with the works of a second composer: Between Georg Philipp Telemann's birthday on March 14 and Johann Sebastian Bach's on March 21, it brought together young professional singers and instrumentalists from all over the world with the best early music teachers. There were also master classes in solo singing and ensemble playing (choir and orchestra), moderated workshop concerts, lectures and panel discussions with experts from Bach and Telemann research. Following the example of the newly formed Gaechinger Cantorey, the orchestra of the Young Stuttgart Bach Ensemble (JSB Ensemble) also played on historical instruments for the first time.

In addition to the Stuttgart subscription, which from the 2019/20 season only included one evening in the Liederhalle, there was another subscription in Ludwigsburg in the Schlosspark Forum. A real novelty was also launched: Under the title »Hin und weg!« (»There and Away!«) the Bach Academy presented a kind of »mobile concert format« at various locations in Stuttgart, in churches, but also in carriage halls, the art museum, the Hospitalhof: Bach finds his podium everywhere. The ensemble always has a Bach cantata in its luggage, which is performed there, then broken down into individual sound examples and explained by Hans-Christoph Rademann from a wide variety of perspectives, in order to finally be reassembled and sounded a second time as a whole work. At the end of »Hin und weg!« there is always a conversation between listeners and participants about the shared musical experience. In autumn 2019 the Bach Academy on a »Pilgerfahrt ins Bachland« (»Pilgrimage to the Bach Country«) – to Thuringia, where one met Bach at every step, so to speak. With an extensive Bach program as part of the Thuringian Bach Weeks, Rademann's Gaechinger Cantorey and their »Stuttgart Bach style« went to the historic Bach locations of Arnstadt, Dornheim, Eisenach and Weimar.

17 <https://www.bachakademie.de/de/publikationen.html>.



JSB Ensemble, 2014 (Photo: Holger Schneider)

Guest performances planned for 2020, including the Schaffhausen Bach Festival, Leipzig Bach Festival and ION Music Festival in Nuremberg, did not take place: The Corona virus also made public concerts by the Gaechinger Cantorey impossible. In January 2020 there was another acclaimed concert at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, with two Magnificat settings by father Johann Sebastian and son Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach.¹⁸ At the end of February 2020, immediately after the subscription concert with »Mozarts Herzenswerken« (»Mozart's Heart Works«), the pandemic ended the Bach Academy's live concerts. The entire Bach Week had to be cancelled at short notice. With a few exceptions – including Handel's large-scale oratorio *Saul* with double performances and a sophisticated hygiene concept – all performances in front of an audience until the 2021 Music Festival fell victim to the unfortunate situation.

Yet the year 2020 recorded a real milestone: The last, fourth extensive part of the *Bach-Kommentars* (volume 14 of the *International Stuttgart Bach Academy publication series* created in 1988) was published by Bärenreiter-Verlag and thus made the life's work of the important theologian and Bach researcher Martin Petzoldt (1946–2015) accessible to the public. The more than 3,200 pages of the *Bach-Kommentars* bring together theological interpretation and the current state of musicological research. As a result, the author succeeded in developing new

¹⁸ Recorded in Ludwigsburg in December 2020 and released on CD in 2022, *ibid.*

approaches to interpretation and classifying Bach's sacred vocal works more precisely – for example also in terms of liturgy and church year.¹⁹

A »hybrid« solution was found literally at the last moment for the Stuttgart Music Festival with its theme »#geschmacksache« (»Matter of Taste«): Some of the planned concerts took place live in front of an audience, although the distance rules made musical interaction and an untroubled festival atmosphere more difficult. In cooperation with ensembles and agencies, it was possible to stream some of the concerts and all the music festival cafés with prominent guests live or as a recording: Concert videos and audio podcasts now enrich the newly developed Bach Academy media library²⁰ with a music festival component from particularly memorable times and at the same time reach a broad audience all over the world. In the course of the first cancellations, the Bach Academy had already developed a concept to record programs already planned and realize them as concert streams with the support of numerous partners. Academy director Hans-Christoph Rademann took the idea of a contemporary mediation of the music of Bach and his contemporaries to the highly acclaimed video podcast »Barock@home,« in which he presented his view of the works with interlocutors and illuminated the hidden depths of scores and texts.

The 2021/22 season was all about »Schöpfung« (»Creation«). Joseph Haydn's oratorio opened as a symbol of a new musical start; there was also a children's concert for those young protagonists who would ultimately be on stage themselves at the end of the season to present »their« creation. Unfortunately, concerts had to be cancelled again in autumn/winter 2021. With the first signs of spring, it became apparent that the youth project »BachBewegt!Tanz!« with its title »Zweifelmüt,« as a baroque term specifically referring to the worries and needs of the here and now, in the choreography by Friederike Rademann could actually take place with Bach's music. The little fairy tale opera *Der Mond (The Moon)* by Carl Orff, which is rarely heard, was also performed in an opulent evening in the Liederhalle. And what initially seemed unthinkable in the course of planning could be realized with a huge dash of optimism, always with an uncertain outcome in the preparation: Young professionals from all over the world are once again traveling to Stuttgart to bring the Bachwoche to life with their voices and instrumental skills: »In dialogue: J. S. Bach and Jan Dismas Zelenka« was the motto, and the dialog turned into an exciting comparison of two geniuses, each with a spectacularly idiosyncratic sound.

19 »Anyone who seriously wants to deal with Bach's sacred vocal works cannot do without it« (Herbert Glossner: *Musica sacra* 6 [2020], p. 344).

20 <https://mediathek.bachakademie.de/>.



»BachBewegt!Singen!« in May 2022 (Photo: Holger Schneider)

The highlight of the season, the project »BachBewegt! Singen!«,²¹ repeatedly rearranged, awaited by children, parents, teachers and the Bach Academy team, shaped May 2022 with six concerts, almost one thousand children's voices and countless tears of joy: With *Die Schöpfung – Erde an Zukunft (The Creation – Earth to Future)*, a version of Haydn's *Creation* edited by Karsten Gundermann, the children sang their vision of a better world with all their might over all quarrels and in cooperation with the Bach Academy ensembles into the hearts of the audience. A preview of the 2022 Stuttgart Music Festival²² led »Ins Paradies« (»Into Paradise«) and, with sophisticated programs and special formats, allowed the way there to be experienced in a variety of ways. Once again, the Bach Academy has teamed up with partners from Stuttgart and exceptional artists from Germany and abroad. New in the festival: a concert (with the STEGREIF.orchester), conceived and prepared by six students from the BachClub of the International Stuttgart Bach Academy.

Finally, a short video that has it all allows a glimpse into the near future.²³ VISION.BACH is the name of the associated mammoth project planned for 2023/24, with which the more than 60 cantatas from Bach's first year in Leipzig exactly 300 years later will be performed again in the order in which they were

21 Patron: Prime Minister Winfried Kretschmann, cooperation partner: dm-drogerie markt.

22 Beginning a few days after the editorial deadline of this text.

23 <https://www.bachakademie.de/visionbach>.

created with the Gaechinger Cantorey under the direction of Hans-Christoph Rademann in Stuttgart and the surrounding area. Recordings of the concerts are also published in a collection of around 20 CDs on the Hänssler Classic label. Rademann sees the vision in translating Bach's music into our time and providing bridges over the centuries; he would like to »understand life with Bach«, because »Bach moves us – authentically, up-to-date, into the present.«²⁴ Without wanting to anticipate too daringly: This means that the institution on Stuttgart's Johann-Sebastian-Bach-Platz, with its director Hans-Christoph Rademann, is well on the way to become a »Bach Academy 3.0.«

24 Ibid.