

with freedom of choice—dubious for him, anyway—he is the key element in separate packages sold to various independent producers, without the supervising care of a studio chief. Those chiefs were not precisely flawless, but the best of them knew how to create stars. Travolta is at the mercy of his own judgment and that of his agents and personal managers, who, on the evidence, don't have the means and skill to construct a career for him. As a result, eight years after *Saturday Night Fever* he is still groping and hoping.

His latest is called *Perfect*, a title too vulnerable to be kidded. The script is based on a series of articles in *Rolling Stone* by Aaron Latham; Travolta plays a *Rolling Stone* reporter named Adam Lawrence. (Possibly you've noticed that the initials of the original author and of the protagonist are identical?) Travolta

works simultaneously on two stories for the magazine. He gets an interview with an indicted business biggie. (No reason is given as to why the biggie grants the interview, speaks frankly, then relies on Travolta not to turn the tapes over to the government.) And he is working on an article about health clubs as the singles bars of the 1980s. The first story shows the reporter's seriousness; the second, which takes up a great deal more screen time, shows that he is hip. Also, it gives lots of chances for aerobics classes with dozens of pelvises thrusting to loud rock music. My favorite scene in this expensively produced yet cheap film is one in which Travolta joins such a class. Rows of young men and women in leotards, reflected in huge mirrors, engage passionately in solo intercourse while Travolta, exercising along with them,

watches with an innocent bemused look, as if trying to figure out why they enjoy it.

The aerobics instructor is Jamie Lee Curtis, the most metallic screen woman since Jill Clayburgh. The instructor has been wounded once by the press and won't talk to Travolta. He gets her confidence; loses it; gets it again; loses it again; and finally wins her by his behavior at the businessman's trial. The old ideals-vs.-sellout theme is simplistic enough; here it is crudely travestied—with dialogue of ostentatious vulgarity.

And in the midst of this mess, furiously trying to make it all go, is the engaging, misguided non-star star, suffering once more from a bad choice. Irving Thalberg, Adolph Zukor, Darryl Zanuck—Harry Cohn, even—where are you now that Travolta needs you?

The pipe-smoking man and his heavenly music.

THE BODY OF BACH

BY EDWARD ROTHSTEIN

THERE would seem to be very little mysterious about Bach. He has reached his 300th birthday with a reputation unmatched in the musical pantheon. He is neither neglected nor overrated; no revisions of the repertory are taking place; no discoveries are changing our understanding of his achievement. There is, simply, the music itself, extravagant in its range and invention: the *Goldberg Variations*, the *St. Matthew Passion*, the *B minor Mass*, the cantatas, the *Well-tempered Clavier*, the cello suites, the violin sonatas, assorted toccatas and suites and fugues and partitas.

The man behind the music also would seem to offer few secrets—no hints of syphilis as with his Romantic successors, no passionate letters like Beethoven's to his "Immortal Beloved," no arcane musical programs with autobiographical clues buried in scores as with Berlioz or Elgar or Berg. Bach simply looked at himself as a craftsman. "I was obliged to work hard," he said; "whoever is equally industrious will succeed just as well." We know him through that industry—a cantata writ-

ten every week for two years, a set of collected works that took more than 50 years to edit. He was part of a dynasty of musicians who were so influential that in Eisenach the family name became generic; town musicians were called "die Baache." And Johann Sebastian embodied in his career the variety of that dynasty's social roles. He was a virtuoso organist, a court composer, a church composer, a teacher, a producer of secular concerts. The facts about his life are known through those roles, in public documents, city records, petitions, announcements, resignations. The private man is seemingly irrelevant: he worked hard, married twice, and in domestic harmony fathered 20 children.

But there is something missing in this apparently clear portrait. We are used to enshrining composers as gods in a temple of art, divorcing earthly facts from our understanding of the music. But in no other composer is the disparity between the man and his work so immense. Bach's life is considered stupefyingly ordinary, but his music is di-

vine, dealing in essence rather than in accident, in being rather than in appearance. Indeed, who can listen to the *D sharp minor Fugue* in Book I of the *Well-tempered Clavier* and not feel, in the ways in which a single theme is contemplated, combined with itself, inverted, expanded, contracted, and dissected, that this work has transcendent concerns? Even the turns of the melodic theme, which hint at something vulnerable, even melancholy, ultimately become aspects of architecture rather than of sentiment. Albert Schweitzer, who wrote one of the more profound studies of the composer, put it this way: "The artistic personality exists independently of the human, the latter remaining in the background as if it were something almost accidental. Bach's works would have been the same even if his existence had run quite another course." As a man, he remains mundane; his music, meanwhile, dwells in the eternal.

It is remarkable how consistent this view of Bach has been. Even during the years of Bach's supposed eclipse just after his death, when his works

were not performed and were compared unfavorably with Handel's, he still had a profound impact on music's greatest practitioners—on Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, and even Chopin. Bach's son, Carl Philipp Emanuel, made money by renting unpublished scores of his father's works; his wife continued the tradition, and so did Bach's granddaughter.

And, soon enough, devotion to Bach as transcendent artist entered the heart of German musical and intellectual life. On hearing the *Well-tempered Clavier* for the first time on June 21, 1827, Goethe felt, he wrote, "as if the eternal harmony were communing with itself, as might have happened in God's bosom shortly before the creation of the world. It was thus that my inner depths were stirred, and I seemed neither to possess nor to need ears, still less eyes, or any other sense." Wagner presented Bach as a musical savior of the German people itself:

If we would comprehend the wonderful originality, strength, and significance of the German mind in one incomparably eloquent image, we must look keenly and discerningly at the appearance, otherwise almost inexplicably mysterious, of the musical marvel Sebastian Bach. . . . Look at this head, hidden in its absurd French full-bottomed wig, look at this master, a miserable cantor and organist in little Thuringian towns whose names we hardly know now, wearing himself out in poor situations, always so little considered that it needed a whole century after his death to rescue his works from oblivion; even in his music taking up with an art-form which externally was the complete likeness of his epoch, dry, stiff, pedantic, like perruques and pigtails in notes; and see now the world the incomprehensibly great Sebastian built up out of these elements!

The amazement and worship endure even in the most scholarly musicological circles of this century. Bach has always been at the center of the "authenticity" movement, which attempts to reconstruct the instruments, ensembles, and performance practice of Bach's time. Arguments over "authentic performance" can resemble disputations over holy texts; they have split the musical community along more than scholarly lines. "You play Bach your way," the harpsichordist Wanda Landowska commented to a colleague, "I will play him his way."

Behind these invocations of the sacred there was, however, a man whose life and character must have been

bound up in his music. Even the physical traces of Bach are suggestive. His skeleton was found in 1894 in an oak coffin, with its skull bearing—in Schweitzer's words—a "prominent lower jaw, high forehead, deep-set eye-sockets, and marked nasal angle." He continues: "Among the interesting peculiarities of Bach's skull may be mentioned the extraordinary toughness of the bone of the temple that encloses the inner organ of hearing, and the quite remarkable largeness of the fenestra rotunda." The skull bears some resemblance to the only two portraits of Bach that have been authenticated. Both were probably painted by Elias Gottlieb Haussmann, the later (1748) a copy of the earlier (1746). A few years before his death the composer is shown holding, angled against his stomach, the score of a puzzle canon: the canon challenges the player to figure out how and when and where a version of the theme is to be played against itself. Bach's right hand is fleshy, feminine, delicately proffering the sheet of paper, while the rest of his body takes no cognizance of his presented art. He stares directly out at the viewer, bewigged in perruques and pigtails, his face as well fed as his belly, the mouth in a pose of slight tension, neither a smile nor a sneer, possessing some degree of self-satisfaction. His left eyebrow is raised, as if in inquiry, his right brow slightly lowered. It is not quite what we expect of the composer either of the canon or the great *Passions*. The body is so solidly there, the eyes so surely presenting a claim, their glance so skeptical—and so ambiguous—that the gentility of the musical offering seems posed, unconvincing, artificial.

WAS THAT the pose in which he made his true "Musical Offering" to King Frederick II, based on a theme that the king composed? With a slight irony, and more than a slight ego? When Bach visited Potsdam, the king had presented him with a theme on which to improvise. Most immodestly, Bach improvised extravagantly, and just two months later had engraved two fugues, ten canons, and a trio sonata based upon the king's theme. This is surely the gesture of a man at once making an effusive offering while raising his eyebrow in pride over his invention and his powers. As in the portrait, this is not a man out of touch with his surroundings. Bach is very much in

control, choosing to write his puzzle canons, knowing full well how they will be received, and how anomalous such taut structures are in a world beginning to love sentimental novels.

THERE IS also something in the composer's thick neck and corpulent chest covered in white silk and a gold-buttoned coat that suggests a physical body that can be sensed even in Bach's most abstract music—in its dance rhythms, surprising accents, and swirl of figuration. Bach was, in fact, hot-tempered and stubborn. He was censured for getting into a sword fight after calling one of his players a "nanny-goat bassoonist." His taste for wine is evident in the substantial sums that appear on many of his accounts. But in Haussmann's portrait there is also that feminine hand, so split apart in manner from the physically commanding pose of the man. Indeed, in dealing with those in authority, those who controlled the means of patronage, Bach presented that most fleshy delicate hand, the pinky lightly floating in deference. Bach *served* all his life. Servile epistolary salutations were, for example, conventions of the time, but Bach never missed an opportunity to exploit the style when approaching patrons. There is this remarkable opening to an argumentative missive:

Their Magnificences, the Most Noble, Most Reverend, Most Distinguished, Respected and Most Learned Members of the Most Worshipful Royal and Electoral Saxon Consistory at Leipzig, My Most Honored Masters and High and Mighty Patron. YOUR MAGNIFICENCES, MOST NOBLE, MOST REVEREND, MOST DISTINGUISHED, RESPECTED AND MOST LEARNED, MOST HIGHLY ESTEEMED MASTERS AND HIGH PATRONI!

But after that very salutation comes the stern and skeptical glance, a demand, an appeal, a complaint—a man discontent with his place and his role.

The letter following that fawning address was, in fact, to Bach's masters at Leipzig, the city where Bach spent most of his mature musical life, from 1723 to 1750. There he produced his great sacred works, including five complete cycles of cantatas, the *Mass* and *Passions*, and the great fugues and canons of his late years. It was the place, in other words, where the transcendental Bach took shape, after he had written most of his organ and keyboard masterpieces. As Kantor of the Thomaskirche and Director Musices, he

was the most important musician in Leipzig, responsible for the music in the four principal churches, and for the town's musical life. These were the years of musical grandeur, in which Bach, one would assume, had the religious and public support of Leipzig behind him.

STILL, as any number of his letters to the Leipzig Council indicate, the situation was in fact far different. Before going to Leipzig, Bach was remarkably content at Köthen, where he was a court composer to a prince who loved music. Then the prince married a rather unmusical woman. Sensing the change in his status, Bach made inquiries in other towns. Kuhnau, who held the position at Leipzig, had died. Telemann, then the most renowned musician in Germany, was first offered the position; next in line was Christoph Graupner, who was something of an alumnus. Only when they both declined was Bach considered. To the councillors Bach was a mediocrity and, conversely, the position was a compromise for Bach. From his place at the center of court life with a sensitive prince, he moved to Leipzig, where he had to answer to several dozen civic and church superiors, who included the 15 members of the city council who hired him, the ecclesiastical authority of the consistory, which supervised the church services, and the rector of the school itself, within which Bach had to teach Latin along with music. Bach was paid less than a quarter of what he had received at Köthen, living expenses were higher, and he was dependent upon "freelance" playing at funerals and weddings. (Bach later complained that a "healthy wind was blowing" one year in Leipzig so he made almost nothing from funerals.)

Bach's new position also demanded rising at four or five in the morning to maintain discipline in the school until the students retired at eight in the evening. He was expected to write and prepare music for all the church services; he composed a cantata every week for the first two years. Moreover, as soon as he arrived in Leipzig, Bach was embroiled in a dispute over whether he would have charge of the music at St. Paul's, the university church. Bach needed the income and pressed his case. In 1725 he went over his superiors' heads and wrote three petitions to the Elector of Saxony, pleading a tightly

"A solid and impartial analysis of the major issues in tax reform."
—Joseph A. Pechman, Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution

The Structure and Reform of the U.S. Tax System

Albert Ando, Marshall E. Blume, and Irwin Friend

Tax reform is one of today's hotly debated issues. This book provides a clear description of where the U.S. tax system stands and how it evolved. Most importantly, it outlines the principles by which a tax system should be designed and assesses current approaches to tax reform—including personal consumption taxes, value-added taxes, and broad-based income taxes—in terms of whether they measure up to these principles. The Treasury's proposal is also summarized.

"... a valuable aid in seeing through the politics of this potentially confusing issue." —Alan J. Auerbach, Professor of Economics, University of Pennsylvania
\$16.95

available soon from your bookseller, or order directly from

The MIT Press

28 Carleton Street, Cambridge, MA 02142

What makes a peaceful man of God challenge his government and church?

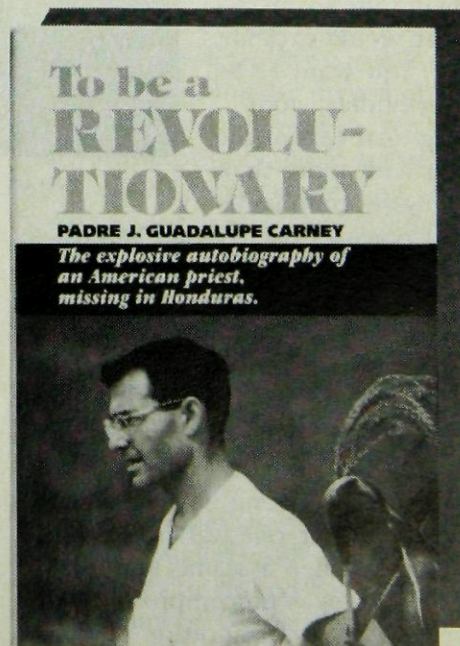
The Explosive Autobiography of an American Priest, Missing in Honduras

These memoirs—carried out of Central America shortly before Carney disappeared—push behind the headlines into the heart of this priest and revolutionary to recount his gradual transformation from apolitical, all-American boy to a champion of social justice in Honduras, who proclaimed, "To be a Christian is to be a revolutionary!" \$16.95*



HARPER & ROW
SAN FRANCISCO

At bookstores or call
TOLL FREE (800) 638-3030



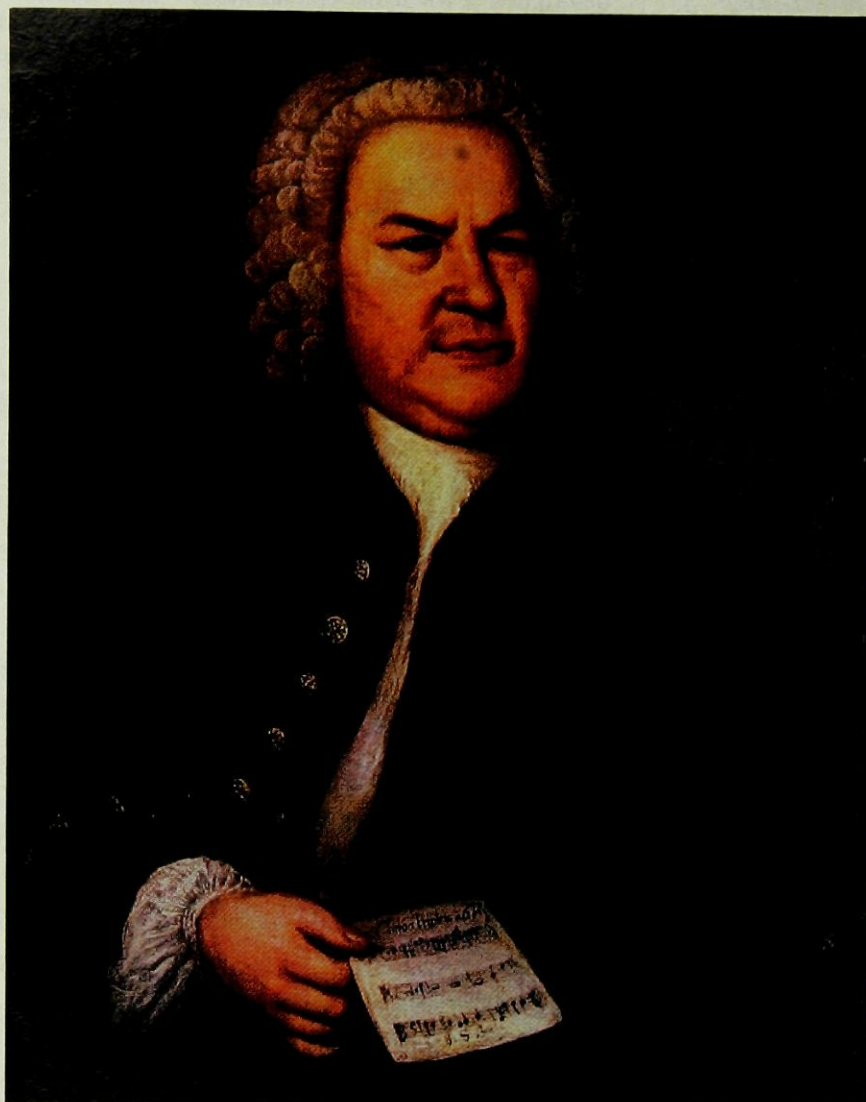
**Suggested consumer price*

argued case. This did not make for good relations with the council; Bach lost his appeal, and the composer found commissions passing him by, leading to other conflicts. In 1729, just after his first performance of the *St. Matthew Passion*, the council ignored both Bach's selections of new pupils and his musical priorities. At a council meeting, according to the minutes, Bach was called "in-correctible." The council decided "he must be reproached and admonished."

Eschewing his usual salutation, Bach sent a memo to the council, biting in its graciousness and titled: "Short but most necessary draft for a well-appointed church music; with certain modest reflections on the decline of the same." The climactic conflict, lasting more than two years, came in 1734, when Johann August Ernesti was appointed rector of the school. One historical account, dating from 1776, describes how the men became bitter enemies: "Bach began to hate those students who devoted themselves completely to the *humaniora* and treated music as a secondary matter, and Ernesti became a foe of music. When he came upon a student practicing on an instrument he would exclaim, 'What? You want to be a beer-fiddler too?'" Finding deaf ears at the council with more than four lengthy complaints and responses, Bach again appealed over their heads, "To His Most Serene Highness, the Mighty Prince and Lord, Frederick Augustus, King in Poland," etc., etc.

These confrontations, which occurred earlier in Bach's career as well, show a keen sense of political hierarchy in Bach's language, along with a peremptory dismissal of political manners in his actions. When it came to musical matters, there was no compromise. Yet Bach came to Leipzig at a moment when music was becoming less and less important in schools and the communi-

ty, ironically, because of the dawn of the Enlightenment, which Ernesti represented. Bach's role was peculiar; he was even dependent at the end of his life on contributions from the community, because he essentially had no social position. When he died, one member of the council cautioned against replacing him with anyone resembling a "Kapellmeister." His successor gave his first performance in a concert hall, not a church.



JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH BY ELIAS GOTTLIEB HAUSSMANN

Christoph Wolff, the distinguished Bach scholar, points out that Bach understood these matters quite well. In the cantata of homage to the municipal council (BWV 216a), Mercury, the god of commerce, declares his gift to the council: "My trade, which here / I firmly plant, / shall provide you with / the greatest part of your lustre." That trade, and the world of the bourgeoisie that developed in its wake, did indeed leave the Kantor and Director Musices looking somewhat quaint. Haussmann's portrait captures the paradox, in Bach's face and body and hand, the gracious

offer of music, and the ironic awareness that the music was posing more than a trivial puzzle to its listeners.

The biggest puzzle is that this most contentious man working at this peculiar historical moment produced such works as the *St. Matthew Passion* and the *B minor Mass*—music that seems to speak without ambiguities about faith and belief, in a tone of voice and with a technical assurance that make the music seem not just pre-modern, but other-worldly. There would seem to be scarcely a hint of Bach treating the religious realm as he did the political, of offering praise out of duty rather than belief, or of demonstrating the raised eyebrow and ambiguous lips of the Haussmann portrait. There is a certainty in Bach's harmonies. However much they meander into painful realms, the foundation is never left behind.

Moreover, the texts themselves are never subordinate to technical aspects of the music. In fact, they determine the music's central figurations. In the common practice of the period, the music *paints* the texts being set, illustrating them, commenting upon them, knowing its own laws are subordinate to the word. This means that words like "descent" are illustrated with descending melodic lines. Relations between meaning and musical sign can become still more intricate. Sometimes the music intentionally bears mystical or numerological meanings—a bass line, for example, repeated 13 times, underscoring the tragedy of the "Crucifixus" in the *Mass*. And always in the vocal music, there are the chorales—the heart of Lutheran music—which Bach harmonizes and re-harmonizes, treating them with as much care as if they too were sacred texts. Scores also bear dedicatory abbreviations, wholly sincere, like "S.D.G." ("Soli Deo Gloria," To god alone be praise) or "J.J." ("Jesu juva," Help me,

Jesus). Bach writes that even so rudimentary an element of music as the figured bass—the fundamental bass line to be filled in by the player—merits such attention. In instructing his pupils, he wrote: "Like all music, the figured bass should have no other end and aim than the glory of God and the recreation of the soul; where this is not kept in mind there is no true music, but only an infernal clamor and ranting."

WHAT THEN of the clamor and ranting that comes of Bach's own life? And what are its echoes in the music itself? Theodor Adorno noted that if we treat Bach simply as an archaic man of faith, we have missed the most important aspect of his music: it is a product of its time, anticipating the Enlightenment even as it seems to nestle itself in formal rigors.

Even the work that would seem furthest from the Enlightenment—the *B minor Mass*—acknowledges the new age by attempting to swerve away from it. The *Mass* was written over a period of 20 years; its Credo is now believed to be one of Bach's final works. It is deliberately archaic, orthodox, exaggerating aspects of formality and faith. Bach divided the Credo text into nine sections, grouped into a trinity of three parts each. There is also a formal symmetry around the center group of three, with the Crucifixus lying at its heart. That tripartite center is framed by two arias: "Et in unum Deum" (I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ) and "Et in Spiritum sanctum" (And I believe in the Holy Ghost). Each chorus is suffused with numerical symbolism and pictorial references, so that in "Et incarnatus," for example, the pulsing three tones of the bass line shift upon the words "and was made man"; the breathing sighs of the violins descend, and become incarnated, musically, in that low-pitched earthly realm, like the described movement of the Holy Ghost. Such a musical symbol is not subliminal. It can, in performance, elicit a gasp, as if the music itself had incarnated a spiritual idea and was presenting it, not for appreciation, but as the simple truth.

This gives the Credo an orthodoxy and a seriousness far more extreme than the most impassioned cantatas. But even in this case, the effect of the music is far different from a simple assertion of faith. As the arias and the instrumental solos make clear, there is an interior world being presented as well.

The communal fugues and proclamations of the choruses are contrasted with the meditative arias of personal belief that frame the central section of the Credo. "Et in unum Deum" is a duet in which the proclamation of belief in one god becomes a sensuous intertwining of imitative voices; similarly, the oboe duet in "Et in Spiritum" is lyrically intimate. The choruses of the central section—the Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection—also convey a sense of human drama, sounding hushed and eerie at first and finally blazing forth with communal force.

All is so tightly controlled here that the tensions between individual and community, will and authority, sentiment and law, feeling and faith—all the tensions so evident elsewhere in Bach's music—are muted. The cantatas, though, celebrate those tensions, placing them at the core of Bach's religious music. The erotic arias between the soprano soul and bass Christ in *Cantata No. 140*, the variations on the single chorale theme in *Cantata No. 4*, the sharp contrasts between choral fugues and mellifluous arias in nearly all of the cantatas, show Bach moving constantly between the public demands of faith and its interior trials. In these works, as in the *Passions*, the style becomes almost operatic, dramatic, very different from earlier sacred works. The subject in much of Bach's sacred music is man—man in the particular—represented religiously in the figure of Christ. This shares certain elements with Pietism—the movement that attacked Lutheran orthodoxy, stressing personal and mystical devotion. There are anticipations of similar attitudes in other Baroque composers such as Heinrich Schütz, now celebrating his quadricentennial. But this religious emphasis on the individual links Bach more to the world that came after him than to the world that came before.

THIS IS TRUE even in the most serious secular works. The *Goldberg Variations*, as Glenn Gould pointed out, does not guide the listener through a structure or a narrative that develops in a certain direction. Instead, said Gould, it seems, despite its intricate architecture, to be "a community of sentiment" possessing "a fundamental coordinating intelligence which we [label] ego." It is the path of an individual will at play in the realm of musical structure. Bach is so sure of musical law that it

grants him freedom. The canons at each interval are as ecstatic in spirit as the regularly appearing dance movements. And the *Variations'* piety is limited: the return of the magisterial theme at the end is preceded by a "quodlibet"—a playful interweaving of popular songs of the period, "*Ich bin so lang nicht bei dir g'west*" (Long have I been away from you) and "*Kraut und Rüben haben mich vertrieben*" (Cabbage and turnips have put me to flight). It has even been suggested that these songs refer to the theme itself. First heard at the beginning of the work, it returns an hour later; its foundations—its bass line and harmonies—have been transmuted and transformed, put in flight with sophisticated techniques that Bach may have modestly considered as commonplace as cabbages and turnips.

BACH'S musical style, in fact, may almost be defined as the play of an ego in a highly structured world. Such, for example, is the texture of the fugue, which seems to govern every note Bach penned. His fugues construct musical orders in which each individual voice is playfully free—maintaining its identity but capable of the most fantastical diversions—while having its position verified and reinforced by other voices. The fugue establishes a community of like minds and distinct parts, very different from the polyphony of the Renaissance, where the focus is less on individual voices than on the overall texture. It also contrasts with earlier Baroque fugues, where propriety and sobriety govern the behavior of the voices. Bach's achievement is to make each voice seem completely independent, while showing again and again their links, and even identities, with other free voices. Bach turned the Baroque fugue into a sign of the Enlightenment.

The fugue as used by Bach presents an order known not through faith, but through persistent examination and exploration. His themes are not mere organizations of musical material; instead they venture forth into the fugue fully formed, with shape and character and tensions all their own. Bach, it was said, could glance at a theme and, as if judging its character, tell immediately how it should be treated in a fugue—whether there should be stretti (multiple entrances overlapped in a short time), inversion (the theme played upside down), retrogression (the theme played backward), and so on.

BACH ON RECORD

Most Bach playing may still be execrable: consider the "spinning wheel" textures of the most publicly acclaimed modern virtuosos (Jean-Pierre Rampal, Alexis Weissenberg, Pinchas Zukerman, virtually any conductor with any symphony orchestra). But Bach has become the most well-performed composer on record. Herewith, a prejudiced selection on the occasion of Bach's tricentenary:

In the last six months, Archiv has released a generous selection of its Bach recordings dating as far back as the 1950s, on budget-priced disks that lack only English liner notes. The selections range from the large-scale, subtly detailed cantata performances of Karl Richter and the classic organ playing of the great blind virtuoso Helmut Walcha to Nathan Milstein's noble version of the violin sonatas and partitas, and lyrical, idiosyncratic chamber performances by the Musica Antiqua Köln. Most are lush, modern performances; nearly all are elegantly musical, some profoundly so.

Teldec has similarly repackaged for budget collecting its important recordings of the authentic performances of Nikolaus Harnoncourt. These include an introspective *B minor Mass*, plangent *Easter cantatas*, the *Brandenburg concertos*, the *St. John Passion*. Harnoncourt is at once orthodox and impassioned.

Pro Arte records is releasing here the "Leipzig Bach Edition" of recordings from East Germany. Some are distressingly unfocused (Max Pommer leading *Cantatas 56 and 82*—M CP27062). Others are unusually rewarding, including "Music in the Bach Household" (M CP27065), and a recording of Hannes Kästner playing a recently built organ in Bach's own Thomaskirche (M CP27069). East Germany's musicians are traditional in style—living near the source and rarely traveling beyond it.

The Cantatas: Nikolaus Harnoncourt and Gustav Leonhardt have been involved in a nearly 20-year project, recording the complete 200-some cantatas in authentic performances, packaged with complete scores. Now well past the halfway

mark, the recordings have helped redefine Bach performance style, bringing introspection and sentiment into the authenticity movement.

The Goldberg Variations: Glenn Gould (CBS M3X-38610). Here, in a boxed set, are two important performances, Gould's 1955 debut recording along with his 1982 rethinking of the work. These should stand alongside Wanda Landowska's grandly scaled performance (RCA AGM1-5251), and all of Gould's other Bach recordings.

The Well-tempered Clavier: Edwin Fischer (Vol I: EMI GR-70028-29—imported from Japan). This important piano performance from the 1930s is full of character and inauthentic nuance—a complement to Gould's pianistic Bach.

Ralph Kirkpatrick (five disks, available only through Quarry Communications, P.O. Box 3168, Stony Creek, Connecticut 06405). This re-release of the Deutsche Grammophon harpsichord version is transparent, restrained, and illuminating. The performance by Kirkpatrick's teacher, Wanda Landowska, is no longer available (originally RCA).

The Brandenburg concertos: Christopher Hogwood and the Academy of Ancient Music (L'Oiseau-Lyre 414 187-1) and Ton Koopman and the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra (Erato 751342) present two newly recorded authentic performances; parts of each would form a single collection giving brio and tension to these worn divertimenti.

The Violin sonatas and partitas: Sigiswald Kuijken (Harmonia Mundi 1C 3LP 157). This first successful authentic Baroque interpretation should be heard alongside Milstein's modern renderings.

Other recordings of note include: Karl Münchinger's lush, pre-authentic string version of the "Musical Offering" (London STS-15063); the Anna Magdalena Notebooks with Igor Kipnis and Judith Blegen (None-such DB-79020), showing Bach as pedagogue; and recordings by harpsichordist, organist, and conductor Trevor Pinnock, whose freewheeling energy and rigorous authentic style exemplify the qualities that mark a renaissance in Bach performance.

E.R.

The theme's character is defined as a character by no other composer before Bach. The fugue thus becomes reflective as well as rational. A single voice explores and creates its own musical universe. The fugue as a style can be seen as a prelude, historically, to its own extinction in a style of "feeling," where one voice finds itself thoroughly alone, without such mirrorings and reflections and architectural structures; it wanders through sentiment and fantasy. The fugue and the canon began to seem archaic in the rococo world of Bach's sons. The canon could even seem, as C. P. E. Bach told Charles Burney, a "certain proof to him of a total want of genius." But C. P. E. Bach's successors in the Romantic era understood quite clearly the powers of canon and fugue. The most autobiographical music of the 19th century invokes the fugue in attempts to turn personal feeling into something more metaphysical, as in Beethoven's last piano sonatas or the finale to Liszt's piano sonata.

There is indeed something metaphysical about Bach's concern with the fugue: the belief that the world and the self are images of each other, that the word and music and the world are linked in their structure and their substance. Hence the nearly mystical concern with musical signs and symbols, from the most mundane illustration of joy with dotted rhythms to the use of themes with notes corresponding to the letters of Bach's name.

There is no way in this metaphysical vision to separate the world of daily life from a transcendent spiritual realm. So Bach did not think it at all peculiar to include in a book of music composed and collected for his wife, Anna Magdalena, a poem (attributed to him) about a most mundane pleasure. It is entitled "Edifying Thoughts of a Tobacco Smoker":

Whene'er I take my pipe and stuff it
And smoke to pass the time away,
My thoughts, as I sit there and puff it,
Dwell on a picture sad and gray;
It teaches me that very like
Am I myself unto my pipe.

Like the pipe, he is made of but earth and clay; like the pipe, which glows leaving ash, so will his fame pass and his body turn to dust.

Thus o'er my pipe, in contemplation
Of such things, I can constantly
Indulge in fruitful meditation,
And so, puffing contentedly,
On land, on sea, at home, abroad,
I smoke my pipe and worship God.

Similar speculation suffuses Bach's musical universe. In his compositions, with their word-painting and affects and symbolism, metaphoric and metaphysical links are made between the most mundane and the most spiritual. The world is full of echoes and allusions. Nothing is arbitrary. Into this world comes the ego, the musical subject, Bach himself, whose work is craft rather than art because he does not create a world, he attempts to mirror it. In doing so, of course, he also catches part of himself. His presence slightly disrupts that metaphysical mirror because he begins to sense in his own peculiar

position something awry—earthly hierarchies and authorities not quite matching the heavenly. So there is a double perspective: Bach serves, but he also serves himself. "J.J." (Help me, Jesus), he writes, but he also inscribes his own name musically in his final work. He is the voice in the fugues, the solitary individual ironically sensing his own freedom while remaining linked to a larger order. We can see him in the Haussmann portrait questioning, daring, stern and patient, and we can imagine him relishing his glass of port as well as his own skills, smoking his pipe and worshipping God.

ADVERTISEMENTS FOR HIS SELF

Mailer: His Life and Times by Peter Manso

(Simon and Schuster, 718 pp., \$19.95)

It has always been Norman Mailer's literary gambit to present his reputation as a problem to be solved by those who wish him well. He is a writer who has gone far by making things difficult for his admirers: he seemed to operate, in his days as a controversialist, on the understanding that if he did not make himself a little expensive, he would not be considered quite so valuable a property. But success at such a business depends on what one's admirers think they can afford, and these are not such happy times for controversialism. This big book once again flings the familiar basket of contradictions in the public's face, but one of the lessons of the rather indifferent reception it has so far been accorded appears to be that Mailer's reputation is no longer a problem anyone feels much like solving. And if we are not quite sure what to make of Mailer these days, it seems that Mailer, whose self-image has always depended on the reactions he provokes, is not entirely sure what to make of himself.

Mailer: His Life and Times is a frustrating literary object. It is too long, and like most books that are too long, it cannot seem to make up its mind about what it wants to say. Peter Manso, an experienced journalist and a friend of Mailer, has pieced together selections from interviews with some 150 admir-

ers, relations, ex-admirers, ex-relations, and interested observers, apparently with the intention of letting these voices recreate, without the interposition of formal commentary, the story of Mailer's career in its historical context. This is a job far beyond the powers of mere recollection, and the result is a disproportion of everything. There is a great deal of gossip about who threw the first punch at whom at what Provincetown party, but most of the cultural history is delivered in the form of off-the-cuff remarks. Unmediated oral history is the record of the participants; those who decline or are not asked to contribute—in this case, four of Mailer's six wives—have to rely on the generosity of the rest. I think it is fair to say that, for the most part, the wives do not come off well.

Still, with all this material to work with, Manso has naturally had some successes. Mailer's mother, for instance—by all accounts a woman of extraordinary character—steals several scenes as only a mother can. ("I said, 'Norman, the language—will it be published?' And he would tell me I shouldn't worry. My only concern was it should be a success, because I knew he worked hard on it. Because then he would have money and be a recognized author and go and write other books.")

Essential New Books for Every Jewish Library ... from Oxford

Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs

From Peace to War

SHABTAI TEVETH

"Tells a story without which modern Middle Eastern reality cannot be grasped. This is a fine contribution to the profuse and distinguished literature on Middle Eastern history and politics."—Abba Eban

224 pp., \$17.95

Chaim Weizmann

The Making of a Zionist Leader

JEHUDA REINHARZ

"This promises to be the definitive biography of one of the most fascinating figures in twentieth-century history."—Walter Laqueur

743 pp., 20 illus., \$29.95

Inside the Vicious Heart

Americans and the Liberation of
Nazi Concentration Camps

ROBERT H. ABZUG

"Here is the tale of how America learned the truth, recorded for ages to come by a great historian."—Jacob Neusner, Brown University

176 pp., 100 illus., \$16.95

Psychotherapy in the Third Reich

The Göring Institute

GEOFFREY COCKS

"The story is fascinating, and Cocks tells it well... This book raises... important questions."

—*The New Republic*

326 pp., \$24.95

German Big Business and the Rise of Hitler

HENRY ASHBY TURNER, JR.

"A fascinating, disturbing picture.

... Excellent in many respects, this book will have a significant impact on all future writing on the subject."

—*New York Times Book Review*

504 pp., \$25.00

At better bookstores or direct from:

Oxford University Press

Department HS
200 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10016

© 1985 The New Republic. All rights reserved. Copyright of New Republic is the property of TNR II, LLC and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.