



Young
Genius

DISCOVER
Bach in Thuringia

Authentic
Places

Charming
Festivals



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BACH CYCLING EXPERIENCE ROUTE

Underway with
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THE YOUNG BACH

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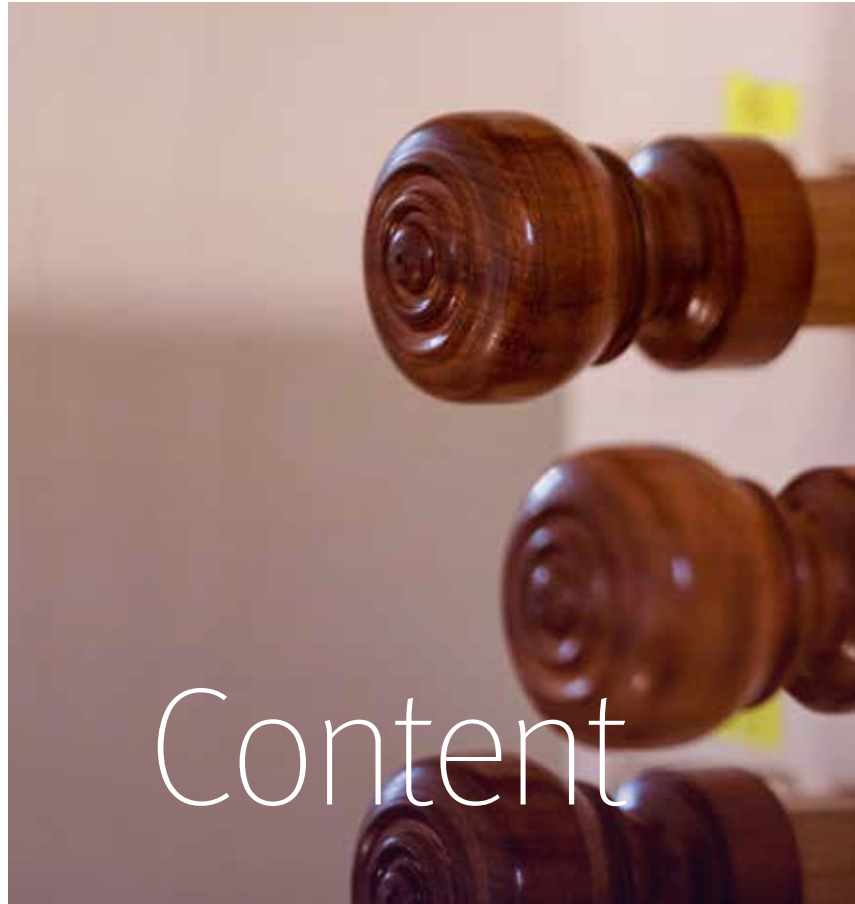
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TITLE PAGE: BACH BUSTS; BACH MUSEUM EISENACH (PHOTO: THOMAS MÜLLER, WEIMAR GMBH © VIG BILDKUNST)



Little baroque castles, restored organs, medieval church spires—each Bach location is worth discovering.



Interviews:
First-hand opinions on Bach's music

Editorial

Discover Bach in Thuringia!

The Thuringian Bach was young and rebellious. Born into a widely-branched family tree of musicians, Johann Sebastian Bach spent half his life here.

Apart from his birthplace of Eisenach and the residence city of Weimar, it is the charming little towns like Ohrdruf, Arnstadt, and Mühlhausen that recount the adventurous stories about the young Bach. One time, for instance, Bach insulted one of his choristers during his time in Arnstadt, prompting a fistfight. On another occasion, he extended his four-week study trip to Lübeck to more than three months without permission. In spite of these small differences, his Thuringian employers already appreciated Bach as a highly-gifted organist, concert master, and composer. Everywhere he went, he was much better paid than the colleagues who were there before and after him.

When one follows the trail of the young genius, one also discovers a number of Gothic and baroque churches of historical significance along with freshly renovated half-timbered houses and magnificent castles in the midst of picturesque landscapes. Above all, one finds the authentic Bach venues that still exist today. After its reconstruction, the Wender organ of the Bach Church in Arnstadt gleams in the original splendour of the Baroque period. A hidden church library in Ohrdruf holds literary treasures from Bach's school years. In the


medieval atmosphere of Mühlhausen, Bach composed the Town Council Cantata "Gott ist mein König", which is the only cantata from this period preserved in print. And Bach's enchanting matrimonial church in Dornheim is part of the Bach Cycling Experience Route, which leads all the way back to Bach's ancestors in Wechmar.

Undoubtedly, Johann Sebastian Bach spent his most creative years in Weimar. For this reason, not only Goethe's and Schiller's names are associated with the lively cultural city. For all of ten years, Bach lived and worked in Weimar as the court organist at the Weimar castle, as the concert master of the court orchestra, and as a productive composer. Inside the massive walls of the Bastille, you can listen to the story about why Bach was arrested and forced to spend a month here because of his "stubborn conviction".


Johann Sebastian Bach's birthplace in Eisenach is a must-see on this journey. Along with the Wartburg castle with its rich tradition, you should allow time to visit the cleverly-conceived Bach Museum. A short, live concert there awaits every visitor.

The best timing for your trip would be to enable you to visit one of the many Bach festivals that take place at particular times of year, or as a year-round concert series.

Enjoy discovering, listening, and being amazed!



This is where
to find the music!
An overview
of Thuringian
Bach Festivals



Enjoy nature and discover
more about the musician
on the Bach Cycling
Experience Route

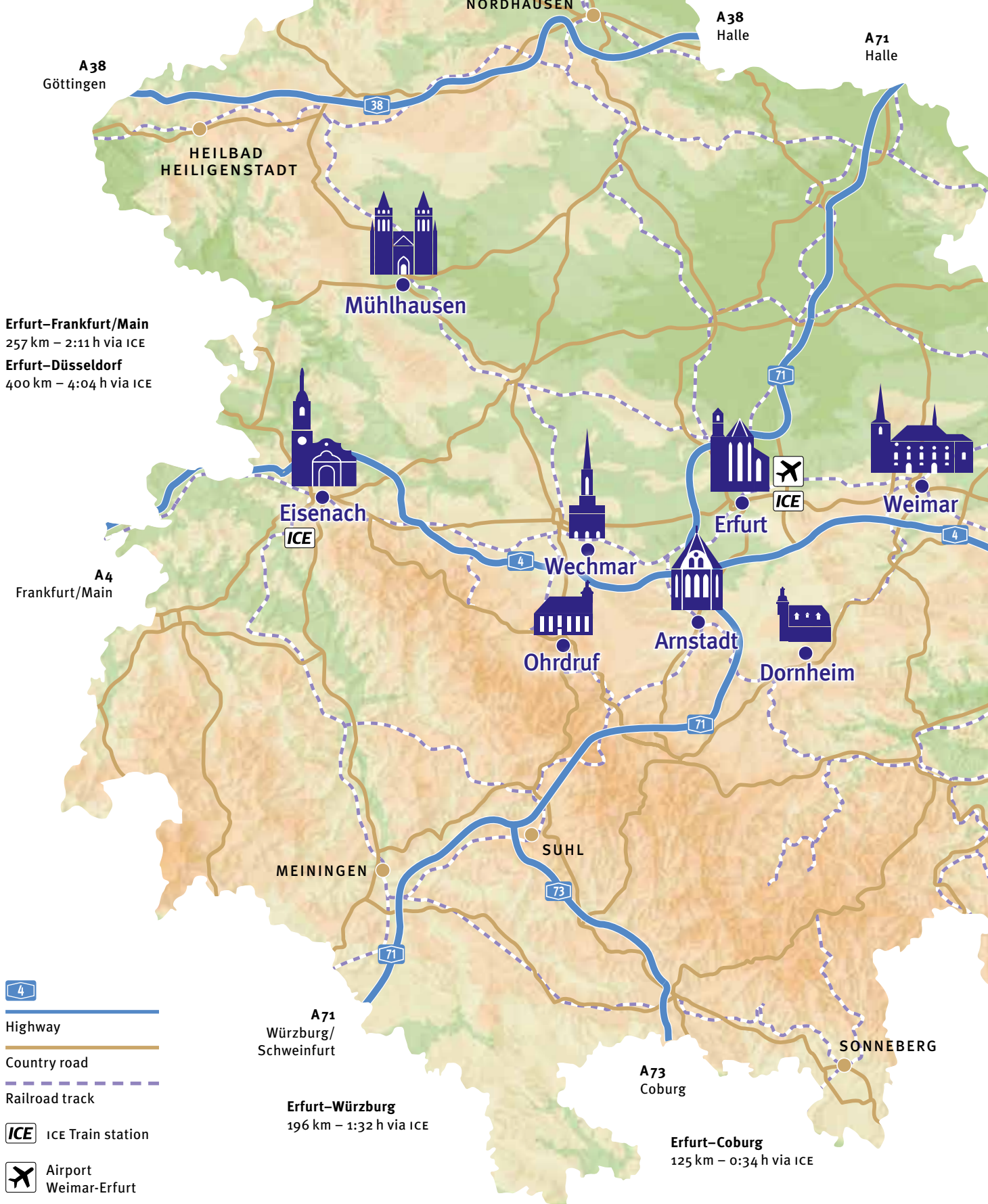
Erfurt–Hannover
219 km – 3:03 h via ICE

Erfurt–Hamburg
363 km – 3:40 h via ICE
Erfurt–Halle
157 km – 0:32 h via ICE

Erfurt–Frankfurt/Main
257 km – 2:11 h via ICE
Erfurt–Düsseldorf
400 km – 4:04 h via ICE

Erfurt–Würzburg
196 km – 1:32 h via ICE

Erfurt–Coburg
125 km – 0:34 h via ICE



- Highway
- Country road
- Railroad track
- ICE Train station
- Airport Weimar-Erfurt

Directions

- 1685 Birth in Eisenach
- 1695 Ohrdruf
- 1700 Lüneburg
- 1703 Weimar and Arnstadt
- 1707 Mühlhausen
- 1708 Weimar
- 1717 Köthen
- 1723 Leipzig
- STAGES OF BACH'S LIFE**
Johann Sebastian Bach spent half of his life in Thuringia.
- 1750 Death in Leipzig

Erfurt–Leipzig
140 km – 0:45 h via ICE

Erfurt–Berlin
303 km – 2:51 h via ICE

Erfurt–Dresden
216 km
2:15 h via ICE



BACH-ORGANS

Listen to the young Bach's music in authentic places! This symbol stands for a stylised organ, on which you can push the pedal and play Bach's compositions. It also offers the most important information about his life there.



EXPERIENCE-SPACES

This symbol shows where you can experience multi-media installations about Bach's life and work. Visit the newly conceived Bach exhibition in Arnstadt and the experience-space in the Weimar Bastille. Listen to Bach's organ works in the Divi Blasii church in Mühlhausen or to a fictional conversation between Bach and the city council at the Alte Kanzlei.

Bach's Ancestral Home

Wechmar

Bachstraße

A living descendent of Bach has lived in the old schoolhouse for the past 20 years! Elmar von Kolson is the great-great-great-great-great-grandson of Johann Sebastian Bach and was invited to Wechmar by the local homeland association in the year 2000, for the 250th anniversary of Bach's death. He immediately fell in love with the little town, moved back to the home of his ancestors, and, together with his wife, refurbished the old schoolhouse. In 2011, the couple was awarded the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany for its engagement.

CONTACT

Bach-Stamnhaus
Wechmar

Bachstrasse 4
99869 Wechmar
Tel. +49 (0) 36256 22680
www.bach-stamnhaus-wechmar.de

Wechmar is regarded as the birthplace of the Bach family of musicians. Johann Sebastian Bach, who himself researched his ancestors, got as far as Veit (Vitus) Bach, who probably settled in Wechmar around 1600, after having left his home for religious reasons, being a Lutheran himself (it has not been conclusively proven whether this was in Hungary or Bohemia). Today, he is regarded as the progenitor of the Bach family.

It is known that he was a baker, died in 1619, and left behind five sons. It is also known that Veit Bach was very musical. Johann Sebastian Bach himself described how his ancestor would play the cittern in time with the mill wheel when he was milling grain in his "Ursprung der musicalisch-Bachischen Familie" (origin of the musical Bach family). The cittern is a stringed instrument dating back to the Renaissance resembling a modern-day mandolin.

Bach Ancestral Home with Museum



The Bach ancestral home, also known as the *Oberbackhaus* (upper bakery), was already the home of Veit Bach, and has been a Bach memorial site since 1994 with a museum about the town of Wechmar during Veit Bach's lifetime, the Bach heritage there today, and exhibitions on Thuringian minstrels and instrument makers. The largest surviving family tree of the wide-spread family in the yard is impressive. It is supplemented

inside the museum by numerous other family trees from various periods.

Veit-Bach-Mill (Obermühle or upper mill)

This is probably where Veit Bach played his cittern—for Johann Sebastian Bach, this was "the beginning of music for his descendants". It was the idea of playing music to the beat of the mill that sounded best to him. The Veit-Bach-Mill has been restored to the way it looked in 1685 and can be visited. The original panelled room in Thuringian style dating from 1585 was discovered during a demolition project around the turn of the millennium. This is the reason why the mill was rescued and restored to its original condition. Now it can be visited upon advance reservation at the Bach Ancestral Home.

Old Schoolhouse

The oldest double schoolhouse in Thuringia, with separate parts for boys and girls, dates back to the year 1738. From 1777 to 1822, Ernst Christian Bach worked here as a cantor and boys' school teacher. Thanks to him, the Bach family recognised its Wechmar-roots early on.

The surprisingly large village church that was built between 1841 and 1843 in so-called round-arch style, and the Studnitz country estate with its magnificent rococo hall of 1749/50 are also very worth visiting.



The restored Oberbackhaus, Bach's ancestral home, now houses a small museum.



MAY I ASK?

Minister Tiefensee, we are aware of the fact that you play the cello. Have you ever attempted to play one of Bach's famous cello suites?

Johann Sebastian Bach's music has been my constant companion since my early childhood. I love it more than anything else. My father introduced me to classical music at a very early age. As a pupil, I won the Leipzig Bach Prize for my rendition of the Cello Suite No. 1. Later, as Lord Mayor of Leipzig, it was one of my favourite duties to open the Bach Festival at the St. Thomas Church. Bach not only plays an important role in my personal life, but also for tourism in Thuringia with its abundance of historic locations and myriad of events. The different Bach festivals in Arnstadt, Weimar, Ohrdruf and other Bach locations attract visitors from near and far. Last summer I visited the Bach House in Eisenach again—a magnet for Bach-lovers!

WOLFGANG TIEFENSEE is the Thuringian Minister for Economic Affairs, Science and Digital Society.

Johann Sebastian Bach's parents, Johann Ambrosius Bach and Elisabeth Lämmerhirt, came from Erfurt to Eisenach in 1671, when his father was hired by Johann Georg von Saxony-Eisenach as a *Stadtmusikus* (city musician).

The Dressel Chronicle documents how much he was appreciated in this position: "... at Easter, the new house man, with the organ, violins, cornetts and trumpet, (performed) like no other cantor and house man before him in Eisenach". According to his contract, his responsibilities as "house man" included leading the city's musical ensemble and the city pipers. Twice a day, he and "four other persons" played wind instruments from the top of the city hall, and he also supplied musical accompaniment for the worship

Eisenach 1685-1695

Birthplace of Johann



View of St. George's Church where Johann Sebastian Bach was baptised.





Bach as well as Martin Luther visited the Latin School, now the Martin Luther Gymnasium (College Preparatory School).

Sebastian Bach



A visit to the Bach House in Eisenach is recommendable for both young and old. In the foreground is the Bach monument by Adolf von Donndorf.

services. Johann Sebastian Bach was born into this musical environment on 21st March 1685. As was typical for the 17th century—and certainly with a bit of pride—he later called himself “Johann Sebastian Bach Isenacus” or “ISBI” (Transl. note: The first letter “I” stood for “Johann” and was often substituted for “J” in Bach’s day) for short. Two days after his birth, he was baptised in St. George’s Church. Later, Bach attended the same Latin school to which Martin Luther had gone, and very probably sang there in the “chorus musicus” that was responsible for the musical accompaniment of worship services. In 1694, his mother died, and nine months later, his father followed her. Thus, Johann Sebastian Bach, the youngest son of the family, was

orphaned at the age of ten. But just as Ambrosius Bach had been taken into the large Bach family, Johann Sebastian experienced the strong family bonds. His older brother Johann Christoph, 14 years his senior, took him into his family in Ohrdruf and became his legal guardian.

Eisenach Bach House

 The Bach House in Eisenach, opened by the *New Bach Society* in 1907, is one of Germany’s most popular music museums and shows the largest exhibition on Bach’s life and music. Five baroque music instruments from the extensive collection are demonstrated to visitors every hour during a short, live concert, including a Silbermann spinet and the oldest extant Thuringian home organ, dating from 1650. The revamped exhibition from 2007 shows over 300 original objects inside the historic Bach House and its modern annex.

The exhibition is enriched by multimedia installations such as the “Walk-In Music Piece”, a 180-degree panorama cinema, in which the visitor stands in the centre of four Bach performances. In the same room, one can become



At the entrance of the church, the Bach family emblem on the right and the Luther rose on the left adorn the protective gate.

Martin Luther Gymnasium: A plaque commemorates the fact that Johann Sebastian Bach attended this school.

LEFT PHOTO

In the Bach Museum, floating "Bubble Chairs" invite visitors to relax and listen to music.

RIGHT PHOTO



TIP 1

Visit the Eisenach Bach House (open daily, 10 am-6 pm)

CONTACT

Bach House Eisenach
Frauenplan 21
99817 Eisenach
Tel. +49 (0) 3691 79340
www.bachhaus.de

TIP 2

Guided walking tours in Bach's footsteps

CONTACT

Eisenach-Wartburg-region Touristik GmbH
Markt 24, 99817 Eisenach
Tel. +49 (0) 3691 79230
www.eisenach.info

familiar with the various compositional styles used by Bach and become immersed in the creative process of the musician. In front of the Bach House there is a Bach monument by the Weimar sculptor Adolf von Donndorf. Incidentally, in the meantime Johann Sebastian Bach's birthplace is suspected to be elsewhere, namely in today's Luthergasse. Misnomers like this illustrate the challenges faced by musicologists up until the present day when dealing with the famous composer. Many details about Johann Sebastian Bach's life and work still remain unclear.

Walking Tour to Saint George's Church and the Latin School



A walking tour in Bach's footsteps takes us from the Bach House to the Luther House. The original entry for Bach's baptism can be seen there. We continue to Saint George's Church. Not only did members of the Bach family serve here as organists for over 100 years, but also Johann Sebastian Bach was baptised here. The name Sebastian, which was unusual in the Bach family, came

from his godfather Sebastian Nagel, his father's musician colleague from Gotha.

Along with the baptismal font, the organ from 1719, with its carved organ casing is preserved. Its disposition (ranks, manuals, and overall layout) was strongly influenced by Johann Sebastian Bach's great-uncle, Johann Christoph Bach. The history of Saint George's Church is also closely entwined with Luther, who preached here in 1521 on his way home from the Diet of Worms.



The former Latin school dating from the 16th century now houses the Martin Luther Gymnasium (College Preparatory School). Nearby, the "Old Mint" still stands, where coins were made and the Eisenach organist Johann Christoph Bach sometimes resided. The tour ends at the Old Cemetery, where the graves of the Eisenach Bach family members can be found.

“We bring Bach objects to life”

An interview with **Dr. Jörg Hansen**, director of the Eisenach Bach House

In your Bach Museum, visitors can not only listen to Bach’s music on headphones, but also experience a little live concert. What made you think of this idea?

DR. JÖRG HANSEN: Since 1973, there has been a tradition of giving a short Bach concert on five historic instruments every hour in the instrument hall. A spinet and a clavichord from the Bach period belong to those instruments. There is even an organ from 1650 that came from where Bach worked in Weimar. The story of the hourly musical performances is quite curious. It evolved from the time of the GDR, when every text that was communicated to visitors had to be approved by the city council. That is why the employees decided to offer a large part of the communication in musical form, since Bach’s music could not be censored. And as a music museum, we offer a musical experience dating from the Baroque period. Back then, one needed a musician, a musical instrument, and an audience to listen to it. This kind of music experience included tiny mistakes and noises from outside, such as the sounds of birds or a bee that accidentally flew into the hall. This is exactly the way music was enjoyed during Bach’s day, and we offer the same experience.

Can we say today with certainty what Bach actually looked like?

DR. JÖRG HANSEN: No. There is only a single one-hundred percent authentic Bach portrait. It is in the courthouse in Leipzig and portrays Bach in 1746. It is an official portrait, although we should be cautious, because the picture has already been restored many times. In addition, it is problematic



that the council painter Elias Gottlob Hausmann portrayed everyone in a very similar way, including a certain dignity characterized by a high forehead and a pronounced chin. In 1894, Bach’s remains were exhumed and his facial features were reconstructed, which was repeated by the Eisenach Bach House in 2007. This reconstruction shows the man who was buried underneath the bronze plate engraved with his name at St. Thomas Church in Leipzig. Of course, the question remains whether or not the remains were actually those of Bach ...


In the new building of the Bach House, there is a room where Bach’s music can be experienced. How does that actually work?

DR. JÖRG HANSEN: On the outer walls, we have some music lessons: What was a fugue or a canon again? Why doesn’t tuning an instrument work the way we want it to, simply according to the physics of it? What was the basso continuo again—maybe the guitar players still know, but perhaps the pianists have forgotten. We refresh the memories of what we may have learned at some point that was very important to Bach as a composer. In

the middle of the room, we have some of our most valuable objects on display and put them in a musical context. The first printing of Bach’s *Kunst der Fuge* is one of them. It is very impressive to see the music lying in the glass case, opened to a place that Bach corrected in his own handwriting. In addition, a ballet company from Cologne dances to the music that we have in front of us, while an international ensemble performs it. This is how we make an object come to life.

What do you find is the most spectacular object on display at the museum?

DR. JÖRG HANSEN: Certainly, the Bach manuscript of the cantata “*Alles nur nach Gottes Willen*” is the most valuable, although it is only one part, in which only a few bars were written by Bach himself. Most of it was notated by his wife and his apprentice. But I would like to mention another object—the Bach goblet: A glass with Bach’s initials as a double-monogram and 14 dots, the so-called Bach number. There is a musical poem that uses Bach’s name in writing as well as in musical notation. It was probably a gift from his student, Johann Ludwig Krebs on the occasion of Bach’s 50th birthday.



Holy Trinity
Church, festival
venue of the
Ohrdruf Bach
Festival

Latin Pupil and “Kurrende” Singer

Ohrdruf 1695-1700

Among all Bach locations, Ohrdruf is the smallest. It enjoys, however, over 170 years of Bach tradition in addition to being a home for the young Johann Sebastian for five years.

The founder of the Bach family in Ohrdruf is considered to be Johann Sebastian Bach's brother, Johann Christoph (1671-1721). He took on the position of the organist at the City Church of St. Michael in 1690, became

very popular as a musician, remaining there for the rest of his life. After the early death of his parents in Eisenach, the ten-year-old Johann Sebastian Bach came to live with his brother. Because of the age-difference of 14 years, Johann Christoph not only became Johann Sebastian's legal guardian, but also his first piano, organ, and basso continuo teacher. With that, he laid the foundation for the creative accomplishments of his brother in later years.



Johann Christoph had acquired his own musical skills during three years of lessons with Johann Pachelbel in Erfurt, and then through experience as an organist at St. Thomas' Church in Erfurt and in Arnstadt, before he was hired as the organist for Arnstadt.

Just before Johann Sebastian arrived in Ohrdruf, his brother married. Shortly after he was taken into the family, the first son, Tobias Friedrich, was born, followed by their daughter, Christina Sophia, two years later. Already in Ohrdruf, Johann Sebastian Bach began to perform as a "Kurrende" (walking choir) singer and chorister. By participating with the "Kurrende" walking through the city, Bach was able to earn his first income. Furthermore, his first organ chorales from this period survived and were discovered in 1985 in the autograph "Neumeister-Sammlung". After he left Ohrdruf, the younger Bach maintained a close professional and familial contact to his brother Johann Christoph that extended into the Weimar period.

City Church St. Michael's



Until its destruction in 1945, St. Michael's was the main city church of Ohrdruf. Today, only the spire remains and can be visited upon advance reservation. The small library in the spire holds true treasures from Bach's Ohrdruf period. On the one hand, there are the "Kirchen-Gesänge", hymnals in folio-format that were printed in 1584 and given to

ANECDOTE

In the obituary for Bach written by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach in 1754, the following anecdote can be found: "A book full of piano pieces by the most famous masters of the day, Froberger, Kerle, Pachelbel, which his brother owned, was not given to him, even though he begged to see it. Driven by his strong will to make progress, he had an idea: The book was kept in a cabinet locked shut by a metal grate. He could reach through the grate with his small hands and, during the night, when everyone else was in bed, was able to roll the paperback book together and pull it out through the grate. He copied it by moonlight, since he didn't even have a candle for lighting."



Ehrenstein Castle with its newly landscaped baroque garden. The new Bach exhibition will open here in the summer of 2020.

Bach monument at the Michaelisplatz (St. Michael's Square) in Ohrdruf, forged by the students of the Michaelisschule (St. Michael's School)



TIP 1

Visit the library in the spire of St. Michael's upon advance reservation

CONTACT

Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchengemeinde
Kirchstrasse 20
99885 Ohrdruf
Tel. +49 (0) 3624 313536

the congregation as a gift by Johann Christoph Bach's predecessor. Since the gift is signed by Johann Sebastian Bach's teacher and mentor, cantor Elias Herda, it is likely that the young Johann Sebastian might have sung from this book. On the other hand, the hand-written sermons "Die Nachfolge Christi" ("The Succession of Christ") by the Ohrdruf superintendent Johann Abraham Kromayer from 1696/97 have survived, which Bach heard in Ohrdruf and which were the subject of examinations for the pupils.

Bach's brother, Johann Christoph, was employed as the organist. After his death, he was succeeded by two more generations of the Bach family. While Johann Sebastian Bach was in Ohrdruf, the church organ was a sort of "continual construction site" with the involvement of his brother. Johann Pachelbel was engaged to inspect the organ in 1693, and Johann Christoph completed his list of defects.

The organ was not finished until 1706. In the process, Bach acquired his basic knowledge about organ construction, which he later utilised in his organ inspections and in the planning of the Mühlhausen organ.

Latin school and home of Johann Christoph Bach

In Johann Sebastian Bach's day, all the church and educational institutions were centred around St. Michael's, but unfortunately, none of these buildings have survived. Johann Sebastian Bach attended the local Latin school, the so-called *Lyceum illustre Ohrdruviensis*, for five years. Its origins went back to one of the oldest



The remaining church spire of the former City Church St. Michael's


The library tucked away in the church spire of St. Michael's holds precious books dating from Bach's years as a pupil.



monastery schools in Thuringia, which had been founded by St. Boniface around 724/25. Until the large city fire of 1753, the school building was located in the upper part of the former “Schulgasse” (“School Alley”, now renamed to Johann-Sebastian-Bach-Strasse), not far from the cantor’s residence.

Johann Christoph Bach’s home stood where house number 5 on Vollrathstrasse now stands. It was probably destroyed by one of the city fires in 1753 or 1808. Even though it is not the original building, the lot itself is the same size as it was in Bach’s day. A plaque with the “Moonshine Anecdote” is reminiscent of Johann Sebastian Bach’s sojourn in Ohrdruf.

Ehrenstein Castle

 The magnificent, four-sided Renaissance building, Ehrenstein Castle, is not far away. During Bach’s day, Ehrenstein Castle was occupied by the counts of Hohenlohe-Neuenstein. The territory had belonged to the dukes of Saxony-Gotha since 1657. The splendid rococo hall and the various exhibitions are worth visiting. In addition, one can find original documents as evidence of Bach’s tenure in Ohrdruf.

Following a devastating fire, the castle had to be restored and will be reopened in Summer 2020. For that occasion, the Bach exhibition will be enlarged to include more information about Bach’s brother, Johann Christoph. The focus of the exhibition continues to be the two school registers that document Johann Sebastian Bach’s five-year school career at the Lyceum: In the first, Bach is registered as a “Novitii” in the *Tertia* of 1696, while the second documents his absence during his journey to Lüneburg: “Johann Sebastian Bach—*Lüneburgum ob defectum hospitorium se contulit d. 15. Martii 1700*”.

The Church of the Holy Trinity, which was consecrated in 1714 with Johann Christoph Bach at the organ, and the Siechhofskirche with its winged altarpiece dating from 1510/20 are also very worth visiting.



Schusterbrunnen
(Shoemakers’ Fountain)
on Goethestrasse

TIP 2
Guided tour following
in the footsteps of
Johann Sebastian Bach

CONTACT
Stadtverwaltung
Marktplatz 1
99885 Ohrdruf
Tel. +49 (0) 3624 3300

Ehrenstein Castle
City Archives and Museum
Schlossplatz 1
99885 Ohrdruf
Tel. +49 (0) 3624 311438

Bach monument by
Bernd Göbel, unveiled
for Bach's 300th
birthday in 1985



First Organist Job and a Fistfight

Arnstadt 1703-1707

Arnstadt enjoys a special status among the Thuringian Bach locations. There is no other city where this many original sites of the Bach family of musicians have survived. The members of the Bach family worked here as city pipers, folk musicians, organists, composers, and court musicians long before Johann Sebastian Bach's day.

And there is no other Bach city that shows Johann Sebastian from his rebellious side as vividly as Arnstadt. When he took on his first position as an organist here, Bach had trained with his brother in Ohrdruf, had spent two years in Lüneburg, and served for a short time as a court musician in Weimar. On July 13th, 1703, he inspected the organ in the New Church (today's Bachkirche), and played the instrument so impressively that only a few weeks later he had an employment contract as the organist in his pocket. His remuneration showed how much his organ playing was appreciated even at that early stage of his career. Both his predecessor and his succes-

or were paid much less. The young Bach not only fell in love with his future wife Maria Barbara in Arnstadt, he also engaged in some escapades. Apparently, Bach rehearsed with an "unknown maiden" on the organ gallery. Aside from the fact that his partner was a female, the Arnstadt authorities might also have objected to Bach rehearsing with someone else and neglecting his rehearsals with the choir pupils, which he considered an unpleasant task. Consequently, another conflict evolved, for which he was reprimanded by the church council: When Bach called the choir pupil Geyersbach a "Zippelfagottisten" ("fidgety bassoonist"), the latter responded with his fist, which resulted in the legendary fistfight.


Bach took four weeks' leave for a journey to Lübeck to study with Dietrich Buxtehude, but ended up staying for almost four months. He had hired a replacement for his absence, his cousin Johann Ernst. When Bach returned, however, his organ playing was transformed.

View of the baroque
Wender organ in
the Bach Church.



There were complaints that Bach “played many curious variations, and mixed in many strange tones, so that the congregation became confused”. Altogether, these differences most certainly played a part in Bach’s decision to apply soon thereafter to become the successor of the renowned organist Johann Georg Ahle in Mühlhausen.

Bach Church in Arnstadt

 A city fire in 1581 destroyed the church of St. Boniface that originally stood here. The baroque, single-nave “New Church” was built upon the old foundation in 1683. It was named after Johann Sebastian Bach on the composer’s 250th birthday. Johann Friedrich Wender from Mühlhausen built the organ for the place of worship between the years 1699 and 1703. The 18-year-old Johann Sebastian Bach was responsible for the final inspection and was the organist here until 1707. Despite many repairs and alterations, this original organ eventually became unplayable. In 1913, the Steinmeyer company installed a Romantic organ in the Bach Church. In 1990, the church music director, Gottfried Preller, recommended a comprehensive reconstruction of what was left of the Bach organ (320 of 1252 original pipes). It now fills the entire church with its baroque splendour. In this context, the Romantic Steinmeyer organ on the first gallery was restored and its organ works were covered by a baldachin.

ANECDOTE

“The organist of the New Church, Johann Sebastian Bach appears here to explain ... how he had come to the market square yesterday evening and had found 6 pupils about his age sitting on the “Langenstein”, a long stone bench on the market square. When he reached the city hall, the pupil Geysersbach ran up behind him and started hitting him with a piece of wood ... Geysersbach had said if he had insulted him about his bassoon-playing ... (and Bach replied that) he had told Geysersbach in *faciem* (directly) that he would take care of the affair tomorrow (most likely by reporting the incident), and that he would not fight with him because his honour would prohibit it ...”

Minutes of the argument between J. S. Bach and Geysersbach in front of the Arnstadt Consistory on 5 August 1705

TIP 1

Bach Cycling
Experience Route

TIP 2

Costumed guided tours
with Johann Sebastian
Bach or his first wife,
Maria Barbara

CONTACT

Tourist Information Office
Markt 1, 99310 Arnstadt
Tel. +49 (0) 3628 602049
www.arnstadt.de





MAY I ASK?

Dr. Schubert, you are responsible for the new conception for the Arnstadt Bach Exhibition. Was the famous organ piece “Tocata and Fugue in D-minor” really composed by Bach?

There are substantial reasons why we cannot be absolutely certain that Bach was the composer. The work has not survived in Bach’s autograph, but rather in a copy by Johannes Ringk, who is dependably authentic in his transmission of Bach’s works. The style aspects are a bit trickier. The many unison passages, sudden changes of mood, and a comparatively simple counterpoint structure are not really typical for Bach. Therefore, if at all, BMV 565 is dated as a very early work of Bach’s, perhaps dating from his time in Arnstadt or even earlier.

*DR. BENEDIKT SCHUBERT
is a musicologist.*


CONTACT

Castle Museum
Schlossplatz 1
99310 Arnstadt
Tel. +49 (0) 3628 602932

Castle Museum Arnstadt with the Bach Exhibition

A visit to the Castle Museum, the former residence palace of Duchess Elisabeth Albertine and her husband, Duke Günther I von Schwarzburg-Sondershausen, seems like a journey through time, back to the Baroque period. The museum is especially renowned for its unique doll collection, “Mon Plaisir”, its impressive porcelain collection, and the only Schmelzzimmer (Glass Pearl Room) in the world (and is presently being restored). The collection of doll figures was amassed during Bach’s lifetime and presents a meticulously detailed copy of life in a small baroque royal residence town. The museum holds a very special object in its Bach collection: the original two-manual playing console made by Johann Friedrich Wender, which Bach played as the organist of the New Church.

Neideckruine

 Beginning in the mid-16th century, during the Renaissance, the moated Neideck castle served as the residence for the counts of Schwarzburg-Arnstadt. Today, only the tower has survived. With a height of 65 metres, it offers a wonderful,



panoramic view of Arnstadt and the surrounding countryside. Caspar Bach the Elder, who served as the watchman between 1620 and 1633 and lived in the tower with his family, had even already shown his appreciation of this sweeping view over the city. His responsibilities included playing his horn at every full hour, sounding fire-alarms, and watching over the streets and footpaths.

Bach House in Arnstadt

The modest house at Kohlgasse 7 was in the possession of the Bach family for over 40 years. It is the only residence that has survived, where Johann Sebastian Bach was a frequent guest. Perhaps he even lived here for a while. Saved from demolition by engaged citizens of Arnstadt, it is now open to the public.

Oberkirche and Liebfrauenkirche

It is worthwhile to visit both of these churches for their own historical significance alone. Even today, the interior of the Oberkirche is enchanting. Built by the Franciscan monks as a monastery church, its 17th century furnishings are almost completely preserved, including the painted two-storey galleries and the princely balcony.

The Liebfrauenkirche is considered the most significant late-Romanic/early Gothic sacred building in central Germany. The burial chapel of the counts of Schwarzburg-Arnstadt with the epitaph dating from 1590 for Günther XLI von Schwarzburg and his wife Katharina von Nassau-Dillenburg are especially worth seeing, as are the “Schöne Madonna” (Beautiful Madonna) carved out of linden-wood, the winged altarpiece dating from 1498, and the superior stained glass. One of Johann Sebastian Bach’s great-uncles, Heinrich Bach (1615-1692) was the organist at both churches. He was succeeded in both positions by Bach’s cousin, Johann Ernst Bach.

Bach’s ancestor, Caspar Bach, once played his horn from the top of the Neideck tower.



CONTACT
 Freundeskreis zur
 Erhaltung der Traukirche
 von Johann Sebastian
 Bach in Dornheim e.V.
 Advance reservations only
 Tel. +49 (0) 3628 70308
www.bach-in-dornheim.de

Wedding

Dornheim 1707

On October 17th, 1707, a wedding party in Arnstadt set off for Dornheim, 3 kilometres away. Both then and now, a large gate led into the small, enchanting courtyard next to Bach's matrimonial church, Saint Bartholomew.

The bridal couple were the organist of the Divi Blasii Church in Mühlhausen, Johann Sebastian Bach, and his second cousin, Maria Barbara Bach (1684-1720), the daughter of the organist and composer Johann Michael Bach. Perhaps it was their friendship with the Dornheim pastor Johann Lorenz Stauber that caused the couple to choose the little village church for their wedding. Seven of Bach's children were born during his marriage with the musically talented Maria Barbara, including the most famous Bach sons Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philipp Emanuel, as well as Johann Gottfried Bernhard, who also became the organist in Mühlhausen. In addition to the entry in the church records, a fragment of the wedding quodlibet BWV 524 has survived—a cheerful, spontaneous piece, with texts that probably refer to members of the Bach family or their relatives.

The church was frequently renovated up until Johann Sebastian Bach's 250th birthday, and a new organ was installed, but increasing decay threatened the church's existence once again in the 1980s. In 1996, the *Freundeskreis zur Erhaltung der Traukirche von Johann Sebastian Bach in Dornheim e.V.* (Friends for the Maintenance of the Matrimonial Church of Johann Sebastian Bach in Dornheim) was founded. Thanks to this non-profit association, it was possible to completely refurbish the church. Inside, the epitaph of the Schwarzburg chief captain Christoph von Entzenbergk from 1585 and a Gothic winged altarpiece from 1430 are particularly worth seeing. The bust of Bach in the church courtyard was unveiled in 2002. Like the monument in Arnstadt, it was created by the sculptor Bernd Göbel from Halle.

Even today, young couples, often admirers of the baroque composer, come to the Dornheim church to be married. All year round, the church is used as a concert venue, for example by the *Thuringian Bach Festival (Thüringer Bachwochen)* and the *Bach-Festival-Arnstadt*. The church can be visited upon advance reservation by telephone.

Bach bust by
 Bernd Göbel
 in the Dorn-
 heim church
 courtyard



Bach Cycle Experience Route

Underway with Johann Sebastian Bach

DIRECTIONS

By car, take A4, A71 to Arnstadt, by rail, Arnstadt Hauptbahnhof (main railway station), free bicycle transport in all regional trains in Thuringia

PARKING

Arnstadt town centre, starting at 1.00 EUR per day

INFORMATIONEN

Tourist Information Office
Markt 1, 99310 Arnstadt
Tel. +49 (0) 3628 602049
www.arnstadt.de

Cycling route
planner



Forest meadows, gentle hills, green valleys, and castles shrouded in legends all make up the attraction of Thuringia. Johann Sebastian Bach spent the first 30 years of his life in the midst of this picturesque landscape.

The some 60-kilometre-long Bach Cycle Experience Route leads through the places that formed Bach's childhood and youth. It is a good idea to begin the bicycle tour in the historical centre of Arnstadt, at the Bach monument on Market Square. While you are here, visit the Bach exhibition at the

Castle Museum and the completely reconstructed Wender organ in the Arnstadt Bachkirche, where Bach began his career as an organist.

Further down the route, the bike path passes by Espenfeld and Gossel on the way to Crawinkel, where Konik horses graze in large meadows. The path continues on to Luisental. In Ohrdruf, the smallest of all Bach towns, you can visit the site of the former Saint Michael's city church, where Bach's older brother, Johann Christoph Bach, 14 years his senior, was employed as the organist and gave his little brother organ lessons.



Important Data

TOTAL LENGTH: 54 km (without turn-off to Dornheim)

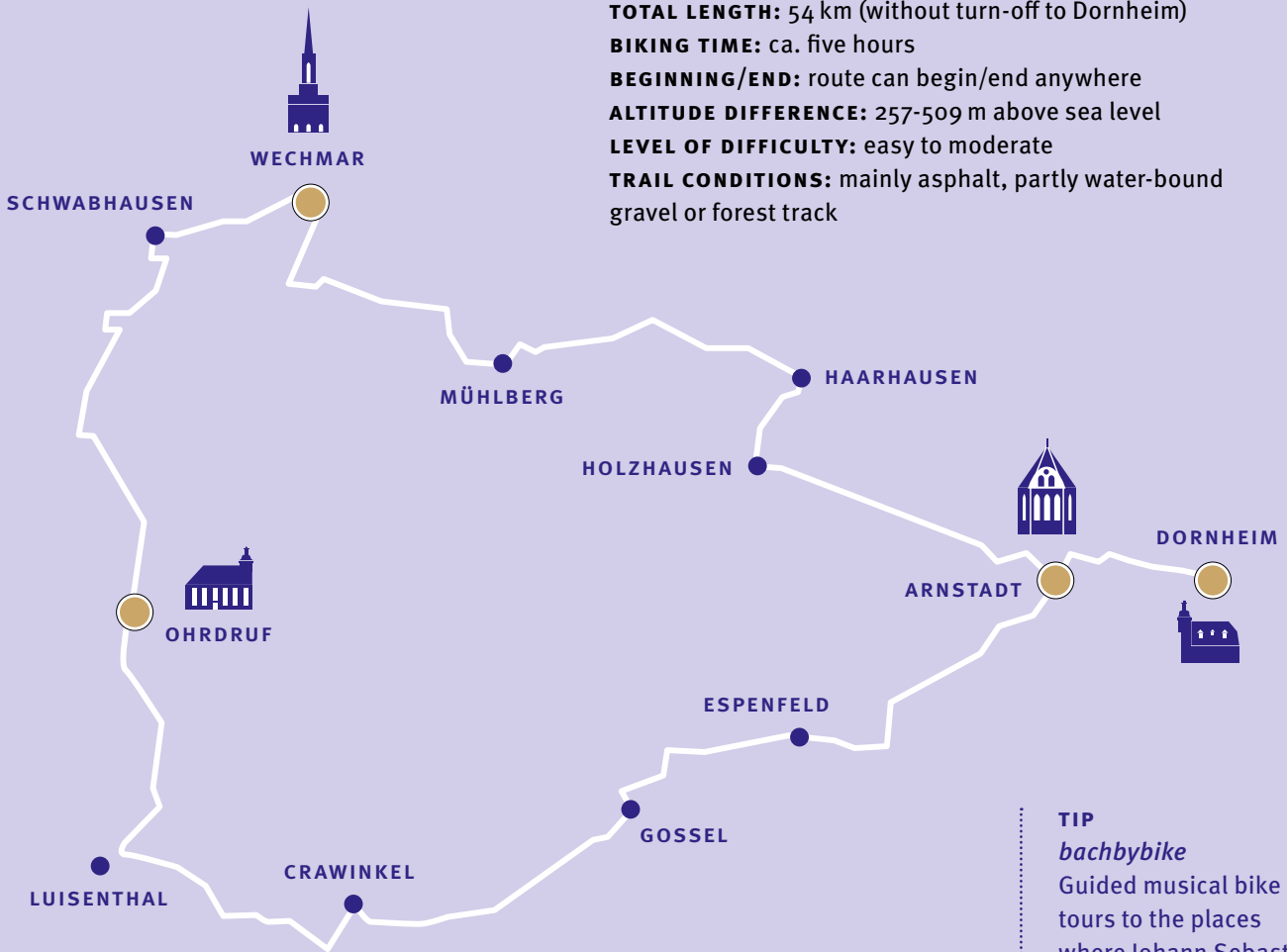
BIKING TIME: ca. five hours

BEGINNING/END: route can begin/end anywhere

ALTITUDE DIFFERENCE: 257-509 m above sea level

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY: easy to moderate

TRAIL CONDITIONS: mainly asphalt, partly water-bound gravel or forest track



TIP

bachbybike

Guided musical bike tours to the places where Johann Sebastian Bach lived

www.bachbybike.com

BIKE RENTALS

Zweirad Böttner

Längwitzer Strasse 13

99310 Arnstadt

Tel. +49 (0) 3628 602447

E-mail: info@zweirad-boettner.de

zweirad-boettner.de

Season: March-October

Bicycles, E-bikes

Group reservations

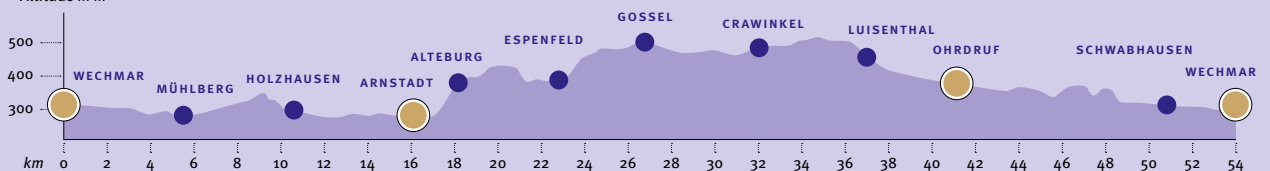
in advance

The church library with hymnals and books of sermons from Bach's school years is a special highlight, tucked away inside the spire, which is the only part of the church that has survived.

After passing through Schwabhausen, you reach the idyllic setting of Wechmar with the ancestral home of the musical Bach family. Veit Bach, Johann Sebastian's great-great-grandfather, settled here at the end of the 16th century. The original Veit-Bach-Mill with its lovingly furnished interior is open to visitors. The route leads on to Mühlberg with the Drei Gleichen castle and the Mühlberg peat bogs, continues on past the Wachsenburg castle and back to Arnstadt.

If you aren't out of breath by then, you can bike the three kilometres from Arnstadt to Dornheim, following the path of Johann Sebastian Bach's wedding party.

Altitude in m





Divi Blasii
Church at
Untermarkt

A Fleeting Performance

Mühlhausen 1707-1708


It was a fleeting performance in the life of Johann Sebastian Bach. The 22-year-old composer tried to escape the restrictive conditions in Arnstadt by moving to Mühlhausen, 70 kilometres away in the Unstrut river valley, tucked in between the rising hills of Hainich and Eichsfeld.

The medieval imperial city of Mühlhausen with its eleven Gothic churches, an intact city wall with walkways and fortification towers and burgher houses from various epochs was regarded as a centre for Protestant sacred music. After his organ prelude on Easter Sunday in 1707, Bach succeeded his predecessor, Georg Ahle, and reported for duty in the Divi Blasii Church. The substantially higher remuneration of 85 guilders, which was unusually generous at that time, might have figured into Johann Sebastian Bach's decision to start a family. On October 17th 1707, he married his second cousin Maria Barbara Bach in Dornheim near Arnstadt.



In the aftermath of a guest performance for the Weimar dukes in June 1708, Johann Sebastian Bach was offered the position of court organist and “lacquey” with a salary of 150 guilders. The increased cost of living in Mühlhausen after yet another city fire in May of 1707, the meagre prospects of obtaining a new organ, and the opportunities associated with an improved financial situation convinced Johann Sebastian Bach to leave Mühlhausen already in June of 1708.

Organist of the Divi Blasii Church

 At Untermarkt, the second principal church of the city, a Gothic, single-nave church is located. It is closely entwined with the name of Johann Sebastian Bach. From 1707 until 1708, the composer was the organist here. On Candlemas, February 2nd 1708, the annual election of the city council took place. The next day, the new council was blessed during a festive worship service. Bach composed the cantata “Gott is mein König” for this occasion, which was first played at St. Mary’s Church and then at the worship service in Divi Blasii Church the following Sunday. Johann Sebastian Bach’s disposition for a new organ was realised by the Mühlhausen organ-maker Wender and dedicated by Bach himself—who came back from Weimar for the occasion. The

TIP 1

Themed city tour
“Following in J. S. Bach’s
footsteps through
Mühlhausen”

TIP 2

Bach organ tour

CONTACT

Tourist Information Office
Ratsstrasse 20
99974 Mühlhausen
Tel. +49 (0) 3601 404770
www.muehlhausen.de

The monument next to his place of employment, Divi Blasii, by sculptor Klaus Friedrich Messerschmidt shows the young Johann Sebastian Bach standing next to his pedestal.



Old Chancellery in the town hall, where Johann Sebastian Bach received his “Bestallungsurkunde” or certificate of appointment.



MAY I ASK?

Mr. Stechbart, almost 300 years later, you became Johann Sebastian Bach's successor as the organist.

How does that feel?

It was like winning the lottery! I am so grateful to the congregation today that I was chosen while I was still a student. As far as I know, Bach's immediate successor was a son of his, but after that, there wasn't a full-time position here for a long time. My organ bench from 1959 is certainly not the most authentic Bach site in Mühlhausen—that is more likely to be the Old Chancellery, in which Bach received his certificate of appointment. But Bach did perform in this church, and his organ works sound amazingly authentic on this reconstructed instrument.

OLIVER STECHBART is the organist at the Divi Blasii Church.

TIP 3

Try the Johann Sebastian Bach menu at the Antoniusmühle (advance reservation).

CONTACT

Antoniusmühle

Tel. +49 (0) 3601 449000

www.antoniusmuehle.de



Marienkirche
(Saint Mary's Church),
Thuringia's second-
largest church

reconstruction by the organ-making company Schuke in 1959, with the help of Albert Schweitzer, was based on Bach's organ disposition.

Town Hall

The core building of the town hall dates from around 1300. Additions in the Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque periods combine to form an extraordinary building ensemble in the midst of the historic centre. The hall, the large Council Room with Gothic frescos, and the imperial city archive of 1614 are especially worth seeing. Johann Sebastian Bach signed his "Bestallungsurkunde" or certificate of appointment here.

Marienkirche

Located in the upper part of town, the Marienkirche (St. Mary's Church) is like a crown for Mühlhausen. It is the largest church in Thuringia after the Erfurt cathedral. Here, the radical reformer Thomas Müntzer preached his sermons, shifting the focus of German history during the Peasants' War towards the city.

Both the dimensions of the church and its sculptural ornamentation—for example on the façade of the south transept—are particularly remarkable. Above the iconographic programme of the portal, we see the balcony with Emperor Karl IV bending over the railing. In front of this portal, the annually-elected council of the imperial city paid homage and pledged their loyalty to the emperor, which was the occasion for which Johann Sebastian Bach composed three inaugural cantatas while in Mühlhausen.

Court Organist and Chamber Musician

Weimar 1703 and 1708-1717

Bach lived in the Ducal-Saxe residence city of Weimar at two different times. In 1703, he was appointed for six months by Duke Johann Ernst III von Saxony-Weimar as a violinist and lacquey in the duke's private orchestra.

Five years later, in 1708, he returned to Weimar. Together with his pregnant wife, Maria Barbara and her sister, Friedelana Margaretha, he moved into the house at Markt 16. This is where Bach's first six children were born, including his most famous sons: Wilhelm Friedemann (1710) and Carl Philipp Emanuel (1714). Bach's pupils, who highly praised the teaching

Bach's sons Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philipp Emanuel were baptized in the Herder Church, here with the famous altar by Lucas Cranach the Elder.



TIP 1

Guided tour: “Bach—
a Baroque Genius”,
duration: 2h, advance
reservations required

CONTACT

Tourist Information Office
Markt 10, 99423 Weimar
Tel. +49 (0) 3643 7450
www.weimar.de

TIP 2

The building of the
“Altes Gymnasium”
(Old High School),
inaugurated by Duke
Wilhelm Ernst in 1716,
located at Herderplatz 14

methods of their teacher, also had their lessons there. For the first time, he had a trained orchestra at his disposal. Thus, during this time he composed over 30 cantatas, early versions of the “Brandenburg Concertos”, a large part of his organ oeuvre that he had begun in Arnstadt, including the “Orgelbüchlein”, early versions of his Partitas for violin solo, and the “English Suites,” the latter of which having only survived in copied form.

In 1714, Johann Sebastian Bach was named “Cammer-Musicus” (chamber musician) and “Concertmeister” (concert master), and became a well-paid musician at the ducal court. However, in the Fall of 1717, Johann Sebastian Bach asked to be dismissed, in order to take on the much better-paid and more distinguished position of court conductor for Prince Leopold von Anhalt-Köthen. He had already received an advance on his salary in August, and was therefore doubly employed. Consequently, Duke Wilhelm Ernst had Bach arrested and locked up in the “Landrichter” chamber of the Bastille next to the residence castle. One month later, he was released “with registered disgrace” and without pay for the last quarter of the year.



Johann Sebastian Bach lived in this house with his family on Market Square for ten years.
(photographed after 1935)

Bach was arrested and held for four weeks in the Bastille adjacent to the residence castle.




MAY I ASK?

How would you have reacted if you had been Duke Wilhelm Ernst von Saxony-Weimar, when Johann Sebastian Bach offered his resignation? I would have asked him to stay in Weimar, to live in fame, honour and wealth, and to make Weimar the permanent centre of his artistic work. In addition, I would have asked him to give my artistically-gifted children composition lessons. I would also have offered to ennoble him.


PRINCE MICHAEL VON SAXONY-WEIMAR-EISENACH is a descendant of Duke Wilhelm Ernst von Saxony-Weimar. Prince Michael's certificate of rehabilitation is held at the Thuringian State Archives.

Johann Sebastian Bach's earnings in Weimar 1708: "One Hundred and Fifty Guilders in cash / Eighteen bushels of grain, / Twelve bushels of barley, / Four cords of floated timber, and / Thirty casks of beer from our castle brewery here, free of beverage tax (...)"

Bach's Former Home, Markt 16

 The house where Johann Sebastian Bach lived for ten years became part of the Hotel "Zum Erbprinzen" (Crown Prince) in the 19th century. Famous composers such as Franz Liszt and Richard Wagner stayed here. During the 1920s, the Weimar historian Karl Bechstein proved that this had been Bach's residence. In 1938/39, a "Bach Room" was furnished. During an air raid in 1945, the house was severely damaged except for the underground Renaissance vaulted cellar and was torn down in 1989/90. Nowadays, the car park of the Hotel "Elephant" has taken its place. Not far from the site of Bach's home, at the end of the so-called Red Palace, a bronze bust by the Leipzig sculptor Bruno Eyer mann commemorates the composer.

Bastille

 The Bastille ensemble comprised of a gatehouse, the castle tower, and a court-ladies' house, is the only part of the Weimar castle that survived all the fires during the medieval and modern eras. Bach was kept under arrest there in the "Landrichter" chamber from 6 November until 2 December 1717 after he had pressured the Weimar court to dismiss him from his duties. During these four weeks, it is likely that Bach continued working on his "Orgelbüchlein" and began the first part of the "Wohltemperiertes Clavier".

Red and Yellow Castles

The so-called Yellow Castle and the Red Castle comprise a building ensemble that evolved during Bach's day. The latter was the residence of Duke Johann Ernst III and later his son, Ernst August I. Johann Sebastian Bach gave music lessons to the two musically gifted princes, Johann Ernst IV and his half-brother, Ernst August I.



Johann Sebastian Bach performed with the court orchestra in the Jakobskirche.

Remark in the Court Records on Johann Sebastian Bach's dismissal from his employment in Weimar: "Nov. 6th, the concert master and court organist Bach was arrested and held in the Landrichter chamber because of his stubborn conviction to force his dismissal, and finally let go on the following Dec. 2nd, and the court secretary certified his dismissal in disgrace."

TIP 3

Salomon Franck once lived in today's "Köstritzer Schwarzbierhaus" at Scherfgasse 4.

Weimar City Castle and the Castle Chapel

The former residence palace of the dukes and later grand dukes of Saxony-Weimar-Eisenach was the cultural heart of the city for many centuries. It was Bach's most important workplace with the extraordinary, upwards-striving architecture of the castle chapel nick-named the "Heaven's Keep" that had been built during the Thirty Years' War. The architectural novelty was the "Capelle" that was built on top of the nave, adding another seven metres to the height of the church. The court orchestra performed from its gallery. Because of the unusual placement of the two organs in the church and the musicians high up in the dome, above the heads of the congregation, it seemed that the music came from heaven. The castle fire of 1774 destroyed the baroque Wilhelmsburg castle, including the chapel with the musicians' gallery and the organs.

City Church of Saint Peter and Paul (Herder Church)

Four of Bach's six children born in Weimar were baptized in the late-Gothic City Church of Saint Peter and Paul. The original baptismal font and the winged altarpiece begun by Lucas Cranach the Elder and completed by Lucas Cranach the Younger—a major work of 16th century Saxon-Thuringian art—testify to the historical significance of the three-nave sanctuary. Long ago, Martin Luther preached from this pulpit.

Jakobskirche

Johann Sebastian Bach's friend and distant cousin Johann Gottfried Walther (1684 – 1748) was the city organist in Weimar beginning in 1707, so he also played at the picturesque Jakobskirche. His baroque double-gravestone is on the south side of the cemetery. On November 6, 1713, the new Jakobskirche was consecrated. On this occasion, Bach performed here in his capacity as a court musician during the worship service.

“Bach is and will always be the supreme discipline”

A conversation with the renowned baroque violinist and university professor **Midori Seiler**

Johann Sebastian Bach composed early versions of his famous Partitas for violin solo in Weimar. How does it make you feel to play Bach’s work in the place where it was created?

MIDORI SEILER: In Johann Sebastian Bach’s day, many strains of culture came together here in Weimar—for example, his musical colleague Johann Gottlieb Walter and the violinist and composer Paul Westhoff, who even lived in the same house as the Bach family, were here at the same time. Other great artists made their homes just around the corner, in Naumburg or Arnstadt. It is very stimulating to imagine the many musical encounters in Thuringia! The solo works for violin represent a world of their own within the violin repertoire. They have everything: wonderfully musical song, virtuoso passages, polyphony and even fugues on just four strings. In comparison to an instrument like the organ, which can achieve these parameters much more easily with its endless possibilities, the violin is much more limited with its four strings. But during the many years of studying these works, I have learned to understand these limitations as a stylistic element that Bach used very confidently. Hence, as paradox as it might be: the violin is exactly the instrument on which Bach wanted to hear his powerful music.



We know very little about Bach when he was young. Does that offer you more freedom of interpretation?

MIDORI SEILER: We know that he carefully studied the works that his Weimar duke imported from Italy. So, he was familiar with the style of Italian violin music, which had remained unsurpassed until that time because of the violinist-composers Corelli and Vivaldi, and he developed his own language, possibly also with the assistance of his neighbour Westhoff, who might have acted as a “guinea pig”. Of course, we always have interpretative freedoms within the context of the knowledge of historic practices because each musician is unique and understands each piece of music in their own way.

You have been a professor for baroque violin for several years at the Weimar Music University. How do you teach your students about Bach and the historic performance practice of his works?

MIDORI SEILER: Bach is and will always be the supreme discipline for us as violinists. In order to properly perform these works, one must have great technical skills. They must help one forget how difficult the compositions really are. Contrary to the composing violin virtuosos such as Corelli or Biber, Bach didn’t care whether or not his fingering combinations were comfortable to realise on the violin. And the audience should also not be confronted with these difficulties!

You grew up in Salzburg in a very musical household. What was your first encounter with Bach?

MIDORI SEILER: Perhaps it was too early! From a teacher’s perspective, I know now: Sooner or later, every violinist has to dedicate him- or herself to this music. In this sense, the first encounter is probably always too early because the complete scope of Bach’s music can be anticipated, but not really comprehended by young people. The comprehension continues to become broader and deeper and takes a whole lifetime. That is the wonderful thing about art, isn’t it?



Main Seat of the Bach Family

Erfurt

For seven generations, the Bach family dominated musical life in Erfurt. As late as 1793, the Erfurt town musicians were generally referred to as “Bachs”. From here, their influence spread over all of central Germany.

Bach’s ancestors, town musicians and organists, were the determining factor in the trading metropolis of 17th century Erfurt. The sons of Johann Bach the minstrel († 1626), namely Johann (1604-1673) who came to Erfurt in 1635, and Christoph (1613-1661), founded the musical reputation of the so-called “Bache” or Bachs in Erfurt. Johann Sebastian Bach’s grandfather, Christoph Bach, was the city piper in Erfurt from 1642 until 1654. His father, Johann Ambrosius, lived in Erfurt until 1671 at Junkersand 3,



St. Michael's,
Erfurt's university
church

and married Elisabeth Lämmerhirt, Bach's mother, in the Kaufmannskirche in 1668. The Bachs enriched the musical life in Erfurt. This is where a new musical interval, the "major sixth" was introduced. Both family and business matters often brought Johann Sebastian Bach to Erfurt, e.g. to inspect the organ in the Augustinian Church in 1716, or to consult with the Erfurt music scholar Jakob Adlung in 1728. It was Duke Johann Georg I von Saxony-Eisenach who kept Johann Sebastian Bach from becoming an Erfurt-born citizen. In 1684, after thirteen years in Eisenach, Johann Ambrosius wanted to return to Erfurt. The duke refused his request, however, and this is why his son, Johann Sebastian Bach was born in Eisenach.

"Zum Schwarzen Ross" House on the Krämerbrücke

During a celebration in the centre of Erfurt in 1635, an argument with a drunken soldier had great consequences: two town musicians were killed. Johann Bach, Johann Sebastian Bach's great-uncle, heard about the incident and applied for one of the town musicians' vacant positions. After his successful job interview with the city council, he was hired and lived in the house called "Zum Schwarzen Ross" (Black Horse) from then on.



The Krämerbrücke (Merchants' Bridge) is Europe's oldest residential bridge. Already the Bachs took strolls here.

TIP

Guided walking tour
"Following the Bach
Family through Erfurt"

CONTACT

Erfurt Tourist
Information Office
Benediktsplatz 1
99084 Erfurt
Tel. +49 (0) 361 6640120
www.erfurt-tourismus.de/en

Kaufmannskirche

The Kaufmannskirche (Merchant's Church) at the north end of the area known as Anger dates from the 13th century and is considered the church home of the widely-ramified Bach family. The church registers show 61 baptisms, twelve weddings and 60 funerals of the Erfurt musical family. Johann Sebastian Bach's parents, Johann Ambrosius Bach and Elisabeth Lämmerhirt were married in this church in 1668.

The church was the spiritual centre of the Erfurt trading bourgeoisie, and Martin Luther was celebrated by the Erfurt burghers when he held his famous sermon here on 22 October 1522: "Vom Kreuz und Leiden eines Christenmenschen" (Concerning the Cross and Suffering of a Christian). Luther's bronze monument stands in the front of the church where the cemetery once was.

Predigerkirche (Preacher's Church)

Johann Christoph Bach, the oldest brother of Johann Sebastian, studied with Johann Pachelbel in Erfurt, who was the organist at the Predigerkirche. Johann Kittel lived in a house on Marktstrasse in Erfurt and was the last of Bach's students. He became the

organist of the Barfüßerkirche in 1756 (Transl. note: "Barefoot church" because it was a Franciscan church and these monks traditionally went barefoot), and then the Predigerkirche soon after. The latter is an early Gothic hall church, in which many traces of the great theologian and mystic Meister Eckhart can be found, and was built in the 13th and 14th centuries by Dominican monks, hence the name "Preacher's Church" because of the Dominican tradition of preaching. Organ concerts take place regularly here in the summer months.

Junkersand Street

Johann Sebastian Bach's parents lived in the first three buildings on Junkersand Street. Along with the Kaufmannskirche, the so-called Bach-houses are considered the most important historical memorial site because of their cultural-historical significance. Incidentally, the composer Johann Pachelbel also lived here from 1678 until 1690.

Michaeliskirche (St. Michael's Church)

Johann Egidius Bach was the city music director and the organist of the Michaeliskirche. The centrally located

late Gothic church was also the city's university church. Today, it is under the auspices of the Protestant city mission and is renowned far beyond the city borders for its Compenius organ dating from 1652. All year round, organists from all over the world come to play concerts here.

Thomaskirche (St. Thomas Church)

In the year 1282, the old Thomaskirche was documented for the first time in writing, and was rebuilt in Gothic style most likely in the first half of the 14th century. It is located in a park on Schillerstrasse. Johann Sebastian Bach's oldest brother Johann Christoph Bach played the organ here for a short time in 1689, and Johann Sebastian Bach's cousin, Johann Gottfried Walther was the organist here between 1702 and 1707.

Augustinerkirche (Augustinian Church)

The church and the monastery of the Augustinian Hermits was built in 1300. Martin Luther joined the monastery on 17 July 1505. Later, business affairs brought Johann Sebastian Bach to visit his relatives' home town, for example in 1716, to inspect the new organ in the Augustinerkirche.



The Kaufmannskirche is considered the church home of the Bach clan. The family lived around the corner on Junkersand Street.



**TIP**

From May until October, the International Summer Organ Concerts and the “Concert of the Best” take place in the Altenburg Castle Church as part of the Thuringian Organ Academy.



Market Square

CONTACT

Schlosskirche
Residenzschloss
Schloss 2-4
04600 Altenburg
Tel. +49 (0) 3447 512712
www.residenzschloss-altenburg.de

Organ Inspector

Altenburg

Johann Sebastian Bach was not only famous as a harpsichord and organ virtuoso. He also had an excellent reputation as an organ expert.

From Lübeck to Carlsbad and from Mühlhausen to Dresden, he was entrusted with numerous, often lucrative organ inspections. He collaborated with organ makers such as Gottfried Silbermann. In 1739, Johann Sebastian Bach was summoned to the residence city of Altenburg to inspect the organ in the castle chapel. It had been built in four years by the ducal court organ builder, Tobias Heinrich Gottfried Trost (ca. 1681-1759). With its beautiful, diverse timbre and its magnificent organ screen, the instrument is considered an extraordinary example of baroque organ-making skills in central Germany.

Johann Sebastian Bach was able to appreciate its qualities, as he records in the inspection document: “Now various musicians, in particular the renowned conductor Bach from Leipzig, judge this organ to be durable and that the organ maker succeeded very well in developing the character and sweetness of every voice.” Two Altenburg composers are closely connected to Bach’s name. The ducal court organist Johann Ludwig Krebs (1713-1780) and the lawyer Johann Friedrich Agricola (1720-1774) were Johann Sebastian Bach’s students in Leipzig. Together with Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, Agricola wrote the first Bach-biography.

The Young Bach

Orphan, Child Prodigy, Organ Freak

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DR. BEATE AGNES SCHMIDT
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Nowadays, very little is known about Johann Sebastian Bach's childhood in Eisenach. That is not that unusual in itself. He wouldn't have lacked for much, however, and Bach wouldn't have become known beyond Eisenach's borders. After both of his parents died in 1695, the future of the ten-year-old looked anything but promising. A destitute minor, he had no roof over his head and lacked the money for training or school. So how was Bach rescued from social decline?

Training

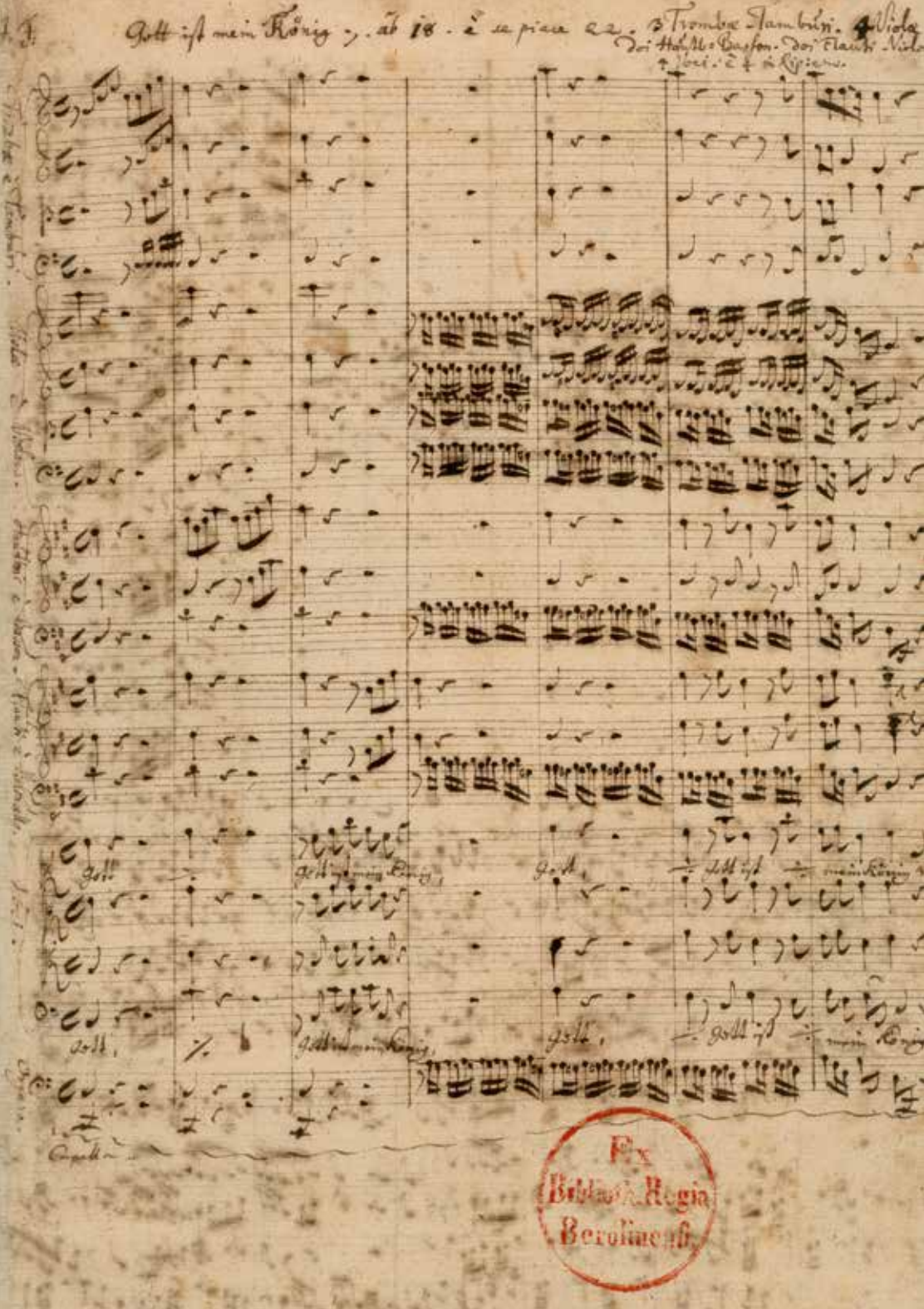
One of the myths shrouding unforgettable musical geniuses is that they surmounted the greatest hurdles already in their early childhood thanks to their talent and gifts. In fact, it was Bach's "tremendously beautiful soprano voice" that gave him a "free table", or scholarship, as a choir singer and thus free tuition for the Latin school in Ohrdruf. That is the town he moved to when the organist Johann Christoph, his older brother, who was 14 years his senior, took him in.

It was also his brother who taught him everything about harpsichords, organs, and spinets. He not only studied playing techniques and music literature. The young Bach also acquired his basic knowledge about organ making and mechanics, pipes, bellows, and pedals in Ohrdruf. A new organ

was under construction in the Michaeliskirche (St. Michael's Church) there. Without paying for any lessons, Bach became familiar with the musicians' craft and matters of intonation, registers, and timbres. In turn, he contributed his earnings as a "Kurrende", a walking choir singer, to his brother's household. This is not the last time that the family network would be helpful to his career. The "Moonshine Anecdote" took place in Ohrdruf. The story tells of how Johann Christoph had forbidden that the curious young boy have a look at a book of older organ compositions. That is why the young Bach set out to copy it secretly over the span of a number of nights but was eventually caught. But why had Johann Christoph kept the manuscript away from the younger Bach in the first place? Out of envy of his brother's talent? Or because of exaggerated pedagogical precaution?

In fact, the thirteen-year-old had already demonstrated his unbelievable talent as an organist. At the latest, that became clear upon the spectacular rediscovery of copied organ music at the Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek in Weimar in 2006. The discovery stands for Bach's appetite for good music. Among the copied manuscripts are Dietrich Buxtehude's playful but challenging fantasy, "Nun freut euch, lieben Christen gmein". The organ tablature is considered Bach's earliest musical autograph and offers a taste of his later virtuosity. Nimble fingers and feet became his trademark.

With tympani and trumpets! The Mülhausen Council Inauguration cantata "Gott ist mein König" in Johann Sebastian Bach's handwriting



BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Beate Agnes Schmidt has a PhD in musicology and works at the Hochschule für Musik, Theater, and Medien in Hanover (Germany) following stints at the Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena and the Hochschule für Musik FRANZ LISZT Weimar. Her numerous publications focus on the sacred music by Michael Praetorius and Heinrich Schütz up to Johann Sebastian Bach, along with the theatre and stage music of the 18th and 19th centuries and Weimar’s music history.

In the “Critischen Musicus” of 1737, the music theory scholar Johann Adolph Scheibe admired how Johann Sebastian Bach “can take the longest leaps by weaving and stretching them in such a curious and nimble manner”. He also began to compose during his years in Ohrdruf. All that has survived are a few organ chorales that were discovered in 1984 in the so-called “Neumeister-Collection” in the USA. At the same time, the highly-gifted pupil skipped several grades at Latin school. At the age of 14 years, he had already graduated to the “Prima” (Transl. note: 12th grade). Was the boy to finish school before his voice changed—so that he wouldn’t lose his choir scholarship? Why did he leave Ohrdruf so soon, in 1700, without his diploma, to go to Lüneburg for two years with his friend, Georg Erdmann?

The *Lüneburg Gymnasium* (high school) at the Michaelis monastery had its own choir to accompany the mass, for which the school offered scholarships to poor students like Johann Sebastian Bach. It is likely that his voice—in the meantime probably bass—cleared the way for the scholarship rather than his skills as a violinist or basso continuo player. Lüneburg offered the young musician everything he needed to broaden his educational horizon. As a “primaner”, he had by far surpassed the educational achievements of the rest of the family. As a graduate, even the universities would be open to receive him.

Johann Sebastian Bach could have already begun his career as a poorly-paid organist. He received the finishing touches in his training as a musician and composer with the organist of the Lüneburg St. John’s Church, Georg Böhm, and with Adam Reincken on the most famous organ in northern Germany at St. Catherine’s Church in nearby Hamburg. The only composition that displays the teenager’s talent is a playful “Capriccio with Fugue”, probably meant to be the final composition in his training period. Where would he go from here?

From a “Lacquey” to a respected organist

Superbly trained, highly talented, but yet unknown: Johann Sebastian Bach is entered in the 1703 court invoices in Weimar court as “Lacquey Baachen” (Lacquey Bach). His son, Carl Philipp Emanuel, later shrugged his shoulders about it: “nescio (I don’t know) why he came to Weimar from Lüneburg.” What had happened in the meantime, and why was he serving as a lacquey? An appointment as the organist of the Jakobkirche in Sangerhausen had been foiled by the local duke. As a result, the Weimar co-regent Johann Ernst III



Plaster cast of Bach bust by Bernd Göbel

von Saxony-Weimar, who himself was a gifted musician, used the opportunity and appointed Johann Sebastian Bach as a violinist in his private chamber orchestra for only 27 guilders’ annual salary. That was hardly enough to live on. For that reason, the time in Weimar was nothing more than a short intermezzo.

Having returned to Thuringia, he was back on the radar of the family networks. Already in the summer of 1703, he received an invitation to inspect the organ at the New Church in Arnstadt, one of the locations where the family clan lived and worked. Why else would such an unknown young buck have been consulted as an expert for the brand-new Wender organ? Johann Sebastian Bach performed the inspection, immediately impressed both the church council and the organ builder, and left with his certificate of employment in his pocket—and not only that. He tripled his salary with this new employment!

Johann Sebastian Bach’s early masterpiece, the “Tocatta and Fugue in D minor”, reflects the influence of his expressive organ-playing, which became legendary during his lifetime. Already in the first bars of the “Tocatta,” all of his youthful power and unbridled joy of experimentation erupts in the music, which lives on in today’s pop culture as a ringtone, in films, or computer games.

Having been employed to play the organ, Johann Sebastian Bach knew from the very beginning what he wanted and what he didn’t want. The thankless musical education of young pupils was rather a nuisance to him, especially after a night-time fistfight with several young boys. It is no wonder that the school choir exacerbated the conflicts with the town council up until 1707.

The disputes finally climaxed when Johann Sebastian Bach asked for a leave of absence in 1705. He was given four weeks off. He didn’t return, however, until four months later. He had set off for Lübeck on foot during the winter to visit his childhood idol, the organ master Buxtehude. For him, the journey was worth breaking his contract. The Arnstadt town council showed little sympathy, however, and after he returned, they settled the score with him, even taking into consideration his abilities as a musician and composer. The conservative town councillors found the “strange variations” and “foreign tones” in his organ playing too modern; they found his performances with the church choir too independent and uncoordinated. The organ chorale “Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern”, which has survived as Bach’s first autograph, in characteristic north-German style, must have seemed very foreign to them. Try as they might, the members of the congregation were hardly able to sing along with an organ chorale such as “Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend”.

Intermezzo

The escape for Bach was the vacant organist position at the Blasius Church in the free imperial city of Mühlhausen. He made an immediate impression there—not only on the organ, but also with his cantata “Christ lag in Todes Banden”.

In October 1707, the gifted 22-year-old took on his new position—just married, with a higher salary and unfettered élan. He composed his first large cantata “Gott ist mein König” for the council inauguration of 4 February 1708. The distinguished, festive music with tympani and trumpets made an enormous impression.

That was useful for cultural politics. The council printed the music, and thus Bach became known to the larger public. At the same time, the publication showed the taste and the generosity of his employer. Today, the cantata belongs to the few works that were printed during Bach’s lifetime. But in spite of all the favours offered by the Mühlhausen authorities, Bach soon tendered his resignation. Hadn’t his beginnings in Mühlhausen been promising? And hadn’t the council just approved of the changes he suggested for the Wender organ in the Blasius Church? Bach reasoned that the “adversities” prevented him from reaching his “final objective, namely to produce regular church music in God’s honour”.

What did he mean by that? Certainly, there were theological arguments between the pastors Eilmar and Frohne. But perhaps there were also practical reasons. His wife, Maria Barbara, was expecting their first child, and the cost of food had risen enormously since the large city fire of 1707. Or perhaps Bach, who loved experimentation, was feeling a wild desire for something new. That is exactly what the professional orchestra of the ducal court in Weimar could offer him.

Rising Star

In the five years of his absence, a few things had changed. His employer was now Wilhelm Ernst, a strict despot, who went to bed at 9:00 p.m. in the summer, along with all of his attendants, and even earlier during the winter. Rather than amusement and squander, service in praise of God was on his agenda. The organist Johann Sebastian Bach was very appealing to his new employer’s piety. Soon, most of his organ pieces were composed. His work place was the castle chapel, the so-called “Himmelsburg” (Heaven’s Keep). Its ceiling-frescos with angel-choirs and celestial sounds provided the perfect setting for earthly church music.

The continual salary-raises from initially 150 guilders to 200 guilders soon after show that Johann Sebastian Bach completely fulfilled all expectations.

With that, he earned as much as the Weimar court conductor Johann Samuel Drese. No wonder Wilhelm Ernst took him along to the ravishing birthday celebrations in Weißenfels. With his opera-like “Jagdkantate” in his suitcase, the Weimar duke proudly showed off his young organist at his friend’s court. A risky, cultural-political balancing act for the small Ernestine court.

This kind of show always harboured the risk that more influential courts would coax away the best artists. The first attempt, from the Marienkirche (St. Mary’s Church) in Halle, was countered by Wilhelm Ernst’s promotion of Bach to concert master. That way, he could keep him in his service, adding the obligation to write regular cantatas. By delivering one cantata per month, Bach composed almost 30 works of this modern genre within two years. With the texts in the image- and emotion-filled language of the poet Salomon Franck, magnificent cantatas such as “Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis” and “Himmelskönig, sei willkommen” emerged, which are among today’s favourites.

However, the court climate was increasingly fraught with tension because of the co-regent Ernst August I, Wilhelm Ernst’s nephew, who had in the meantime come of age. He and his younger brother, Johann Ernst IV, shared their passion for the latest music by Vivaldi, Torelli, and Marcello with the young composer Bach. Numerous violin and harpsichord concertos were composed in the Italian style. There was also a lively musical exchange with Georg Philipp Telemann in nearby Eisenach. Both – Telemann and Bach – were in close contact with Johann Ernst, who furnished them with new French and Italian compositions after he returned from his cavalier’s tour in the Netherlands.

For a long time, Johann Sebastian Bach tried to avoid the smouldering family clash at court. When he was not allowed to succeed Drese after the court conductor died, he felt overlooked. Nothing held him in Weimar anymore. And he resigned in August of 1717. He had already been promised a new job as the court conductor in Anhalt-Köthen. The Weimar duke was outraged about the “stubborn conviction” of his over-confident employee and put him under arrest for four weeks, followed by his disgraceful dismissal. Bach utilised the time alone. It is likely that he composed some of the “Wohltemperiertes Klavier” and completed the “Orgelbüchlein” within the austere walls of the jail cell, before he set off on a new path.

The Thuringian Bach Festival is the largest music festival in Thuringia. Every year during the weeks around Easter, more than 50 concerts take place in the historic Bach sites throughout the state, attracting some 20,000 Bach-lovers from all over the world.

The places in Thuringia where Bach lived and worked during his early years are the centre of the *Bach Festival*. This is where internationally-renowned soloists and ensembles perform along with young artists at the beginning of their careers. Their interpretations are surprising and impressive—and are especially effective in the authentic venues. The *Thuringian Bach Festival* does not exclusively celebrate early music, however. Cross-over events in clubs, galleries, and factory halls show that Bach inspires other artists up until the present day. Dance, jazz, or baroque lounges enrich the festival programme and allow us to see Bach from new perspectives. Each year, the *Bach Festival* is opened with a *Long Night of House Music*, in which over a hundred public house concerts take place in private living rooms across the state. Children and adults, amateurs and professionals perform together and present Thuringia as a lively Bach-land.

WWW.THUERINGER-BACHWOCHEN.DE/EN

Thuringian Bach Festival



Asya Fatayeva
(saxophonist)
on the skywalk
of the Leuchten-
burg castle

“Bach needs new audiences”

Christoph Drescher is the Managing Director of the *Thuringian Bach Festival*

The Thuringia Bach Festival is the largest Bach and classical music festival in Thuringia. What is your recipe for success?

CHRISTOPH DRESCHER: I think it is always the mix of our programme. Of course, people come because we can show Bach in the authentic venues. That is something that you cannot experience anywhere else. In Thuringia, it is especially sexy that we have so many places that are close together, but are so different from each other, in cities as much as in villages like Dornheim, for example. The artists can be experienced there in a very intimate atmosphere. That is very special, and I really believe that this strongly contributes to the success of the Bach Festival.

But it also counts that we do that without neglecting other aspects: that we show Bach in historic venues in fantastic interpretations, but always try not to see him solely as a monument to be protected, and to newly discover him, as well—with cross-over projects, new works, or unusual concerts that are full of surprises and show that Bach is still relevant even today.

Along with the original Bach locations throughout Thuringia, you look for new, unusual venues. Does Bach’s music need new venues?

CHRISTOPH DRESCHER: Bach might not need new venues, but Bach needs new audiences. That is where new venues can help reach new target markets. Our experience shows that different people come to a concert at the Milchhof Arnstadt or the Zughafen in Erfurt than a church concert. It’s easier to confront them with Bach in these venues than in the traditional



places. In that sense, the place is the means to an end. But it is always essential that the place is special and good. I wouldn’t try to create a new Bach venue if it has poor acoustics and is not suited to presenting the music in its best quality. If everything works, then it can attract a new audience—and show Bach in a new light.

Where does the audience come from for the *Thuringian Bach Festival*? From Thuringia?

CHRISTOPH DRESCHER: We have two thirds tourists and one third Thuringians. I find exactly this mixture important. If we were purely a UFO-festival that is there for three weeks and then disappears, that brings along its audience and has no local connections, then there would be something wrong in my opinion. That is especially true here, because there is a natural local Bach scene, which is a great benefit for us. This way, we always tell the story of the Thuringian Bach country, to which the Thuringian audience has a very strong bond.

We need the tourists just as much, of course. Not only because it would be too much for the Thuringians to go to 50 concerts in three weeks, but also

because we want to offer exactly this incentive to come to Thuringia, follow in Bach’s footsteps, and discover the region. It often happens that you go to a concert in Arnstadt and then see the same people on the next day in Mühlhausen—music fans who really spend a weekend going to lots of concerts and travel around, discovering this charming little Bach-state of Thuringia in an individual way.

What is your favourite piece by Bach?

CHRISTOPH DRESCHER: There is no such thing as the favourite piece. There are always several, which you might sort by category. I have fewer insider’s tips than one might think. The second Violin Partita is very close to my heart, also the Goldberg Variations, but in the end, it is probably the sacred works: the “Bekümmernis” Cantata or the Cantata 131—that is music that moves me most. And naturally Saint Matthew’s Passion. This is the music that speaks to me as a “Bach Christian” and that sparks a spiritual sentiment in me. I am like so many others who find exactly that in Bach: it is this exceptional music that does so much to you.



Performance of the Saint John's Passion at the Bach Church in Arnstadt



MAY I ASK?

There are numerous memorial sites that are connected to Bach in Arnstadt. Which is your favourite?

My favourite place in Arnstadt is the Johann Sebastian Bach Church. I am fascinated by this place because it comprises so much history, and I have so much to do with it because of my work. I can find peace and quiet there, far removed from an otherwise hectic daily life, and can listen to wonderful organ music.

ALEXANDRA LEHMANN
is the festival manager of the Bach-Festival-Arnstadt.

Bach-Festival-Arnstadt

The *Bach-Festival-Arnstadt* was formerly called the *Arnstädter Bachtage* and has taken place every year around Johann Sebastian Bach's birthday on 21 March since 2005.

The one-week festival presents a programme comprised of concerts, guided tours, culinary offerings, children's programmes, a bus tour to Thuringian church organs, and an arts and crafts market. The Arnstadt Bach-patronage is a tradition. Already during the 19th century, various concert series took place here. The *Bach-Festival-Arnstadt* attracts many culturally interested visitors into town every year and celebrates the life and work of the composer in a very appropriate way.

WWW.BACH-FESTIVAL.DE

The festival of the smallest Bach city in Thuringia is still an insider tip in the musical landscape of central Germany.

Since the *Bachtage* took place for the first time in June of 2010, visitors have been impressed each time by the familiar atmosphere of the concerts in the place where Bach spent his early youth. Consequently, local children and young people are always included in the concert programme here. In addition, the festival features choir concerts and cantata

worship services, which are performed by singers and instrumentalists from the region. The combination with performances by renowned artists and ensembles make it possible to experience professional quality in authentic venues from Bach's youth.

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WWW.BACHTAGE-OHRDRUF.DE
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Ohrdruf Bach Festival



Calmus Ensemble at the Holy Trinity Church in Ohrdruf

Bach Biennale Weimar



Interactive guided
tour with music
for children at
the *KinderBach-
Biennale (KIBA)*

Founded under the patronage of Nikolaus Harnoncourt († 2016), the festival takes place every two years in July in the Bach city of Weimar and makes Bach accessible to visitors on a very high level.

Renowned international artists and ensembles play baroque instruments, turning the music into a sound-sensory experience in authentic venues. Inspired by the young Bach, the *Bach Biennale Weimar* combines classical concerts with unconventional formats such as lunchtime- and walking-concerts, baroque festivities or the discussion-concerts called “Dialogue with Bach”. This way, the festival makes Bach into an individual encounter apart from the “Baroque Mainstream”.

The audience experiences Bach in a modern and charismatic context within the cultural city: Weimar Bach (hi)stories at historical sites such as the residence castle, the Herder and the St. James’ Churches. The *Bach Biennale Weimar* attracted nation-wide attention when it scheduled events in the former jail cell in the Bastille, in which Bach was under arrest and finally dismissed from his Weimar appointment “in registered disgrace”.

Since 2012, children aged 6-14 have enjoyed the *KinderBachBiennale (KIBA)* with its workshops, join-in concerts and interactive walking tours.

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WWW.BACHBIENNALEWEIMAR.DE
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Ensemble
“Viel Lärm
um nichts”
(“Much Ado
About Noth-
ing”) at the
Schießhaus
Weimar

“A Window to Bach’s World”

Prof. Myriam Eichberger, Intendant of the *Bach Biennale Weimar* follows the genius’ trail



Original instruments in original venues—what makes the *Bach Biennale Weimar* so special?

PROF. MYRIAM EICHBERGER: Weimar emanates the flair of past epochs much more clearly than other modern cities. When historic instruments and original venues come together in a symbiosis here, you come very close to how Bach himself heard his own music. We don’t know all the details, but we do know how he didn’t hear his music, namely on modern concert grand pianos or played on steel strings. We want to rediscover this very special sound language and timbre—much like an old painting that has been painted over and now rediscovered—and share that with the audience so that they, too, can be moved by it.

Several festival venues were built after Bach’s time. How does that fit in with the authenticity of historical venues?

PROF. MYRIAM EICHBERGER: The residence castle is a first-class Weimar Bach-venue—even though it was almost completely newly built after the castle fire of 1774—with fantastic acoustics. We were the first to discover the jail cell in the original “Bastille” as a venue for events in the context of the *Bach Biennale Weimar*. We have always been especially interested in places with a special flair. They offer the audience an extraordinary listening experience. The Schießhaus, with its unparalleled acoustics is one of them; it was built in Renaissance style. It is ideal for the less “loud” historical instruments. Sometimes we just let ourselves be inspired by attractive places like the charming Herder garden. And, we will always continue to

search because there are always new, exciting places to discover in Weimar!

In the past ten years, the *Bach Biennale Weimar* has primarily focussed on Bach’s Weimar period. What can we expect in the next few years?

PROF. MYRIAM EICHBERGER: Our concert programme not only focusses on Bach’s Weimar works, but also on his sons’ music. We are interested in Bach-stories in the original, i. e. by connecting his music and the city in an associative way: for example, we recall Bach beginning here as the court organist by performing his organ improvisations or the technically and unbelievably challenging Vivaldi arrangements. They were a quantum leap forward for the organ literature of the time. Nothing this difficult had ever been composed, and they are almost unplayable even today. In the near future, the spotlight might be on improvisation and spontaneous performance, which would offer a new facet to our established festival profile.

How do you make Bach accessible to international students and a broader audience?

PROF. MYRIAM EICHBERGER: In recent decades, the reputation of early music has dramatically improved at music schools. Historic performance practice has taken on an important role in the reception of Bach and the media landscape. Many paths lead to Bach. Of course, foreign students have more cultural hurdles to overcome than German ones. Asian students, for example, are not accustomed to free or even emotional musical expression. I then show a portrayal of the doubting Apostle Thomas, who lays his finger in the wound after Jesus has risen; music can also transport this pain: a dominant seventh-ninth chord is supposed to be touching, in a baroque way. You can reach everyone with Bach’s music because Bach was one of the greatest musicians ever—or, as Nikolaus Harnoncourt said, “Bach is the greatest gift that Heaven has given us. If we only had the fine antennas to take it all in. It will never be everything, because Bach is greater than what we can imagine.”

Thuringian Organ Summer

In Germany, the organ enjoys such great respect that the UNESCO entered Germany's organ building on its list of Cultural Heritage. If you go exploring in Thuringia, you will become part of a very special audience: about 2,000 examples of this "Queen of all instruments" from six centuries can be found here.

Along with the impressions that Johann Sebastian Bach collected in northern Germany, it was the Thuringian organs that influenced his idea of the perfect sound. Later, as a virtuoso, composer and inspector, he influenced organ

building during his lifetime. Every year since 1991, renowned musicians bring these organs to life and surprize their audiences with special instrumentations and programmes. To this date, more than 2,000 concerts have been performed. Many communities offer small culinary attractions and invite visitors to enjoy their social gatherings.

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WWW.ORGELSSOMMER.DE
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Concert at Saint George's church in Eisenach



Eisenach Bach Festival

Since 2017, the Evangelical-Lutheran Parish of Eisenach has organized the *Eisenach Bach Festival* around Reformation Day on 31 October. Johann Sebastian Bach was born on 21 March 1685 in Eisenach and was baptized two days later at Saint George's church.

Johann Sebastian Bach's and Martin Luther's paths crossed in Eisenach, where—200 years apart—both attended Latin school here and sang in the Eisenach “Kurrende” (walking choir). During the *Eisenach Bach Festival*, you can experience cantata worship services, orchestra concerts, chamber music and

organ, lectures, guided tours, and themed bus trips. Along with the Eisenach Bach Festival, there are many other concerts and series of events at Saint George's, including the *Eisenach Sunday Concerts* from Easter until the end of October at 4:00 p. m. or the *Eisenach Market Concerts*, daily (except Sundays) from July until September with 30 minutes of organ music.

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WWW.BACHFEST-EISENACH.DE
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Other Festivals for Early Music in Thuringia



MDR Music Summer “Bach Places”

The *MDR Music Summer* follows Bach’s trail throughout Thuringia: the series pays tribute to the composer with the series “Bach Places” with concerts in places where he lived and worked. The journey follows along his life’s path for about ten days, from his baptismal church in Eisenach, to Weimar, Arnstadt, and Mühlhausen, where Bach was employed as an organist and court conductor. The concert programmes focus on Bach’s diverse works and his influence on other composers. The guests in past years included early music specialists such as Dorothee Mields, the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, and the King’s Singers. The series ends every year with a memorial concert on the anniversary of Bach’s death, July 28th, at his grave in the Leipzig Saint Thomas’ Church.

WWW.MDR.DE/MUSIKSOMMER



Heinrich Schütz Musikfest

Immerse yourself in the fascinating sound-world of the 17th century: inspirational concerts with internationally-renowned artists as well as young interpreters of the next generation, authentic and atmospherically unique places, unconventional concert formats, very close to the historically authentic performance practice as much as lively, fresh interpretations from today’s perspective—that is what the Heinrich Schütz Musikfest promises its visitors every year in October. For more than 20 years, it has been a lively forum for early baroque music and presents the composer who was already considered to be the “father of our modern music” by his contemporaries.

WWW.SCHÜTZ-MUSIKFEST.DE/ENG

More Music



Güldener Herbst

Each year, the *Güldener Herbst*, the festival for early music in Thuringia, takes on the challenge of presenting little treasures from the 16th to 18th century from Thuringian archives and libraries. These musical rarities are sometimes performed for the first time, including some unknown works by the Bach family. Beginning with the opening concert at the Herder Church in Weimar, the festival organises concerts with renowned ensembles such as the *lautten campagney BERLIN* or *Capella della Torre* at concert venues with a special atmosphere all over Thuringia. For more than twenty years, it has been presented by the *Academia Musicalis Thuringiae e.V.* with great personal engagement.

WWW.GUELDENER-HERBST.DE



Playground Festival Weimar

The name of the festival refers to the experimental field of Renaissance and early baroque music in connection with folk music. Concerts, multi-genre projects, workshops with musicians and master dancers, and the “Early Music Jam Sessions” are the core of the festival. For the concerts, ensembles are engaged that have specialised on historical improvisation with authentic instruments from the Renaissance and Baroque periods. One large emphasis is the dance music and art of historic improvisation that Johann Sebastian Bach also greatly appreciated.

WWW.PLAYGROUNDFESTIVAL.DE

Service

The Thuringian Bach Cities

Altenburg

Tourist Information Office
Markt 10
04600 Altenburg
Tel. +49 (0) 3447 896689
www.altenburg.travel

**Altenburg Castle Chapel,
Residence Castle**
Schloss 2-4
04600 Altenburg
Tel. +49 (0) 3447 512712
www.residenzschloss-altenburg.de

Arnstadt

Tourist Information Office
Markt 1
99310 Arnstadt
Tel. +49 (0) 3628 602049
www.arnstadt.de

Bach Monument
Unterm Markt 3
99310 Arnstadt

Bach House
Kohlgrasse 7
99310 Arnstadt

Bach Church
Markt
99310 Arnstadt

Liebfrauenkirche
An der Liebfrauenkirche
99310 Arnstadt

Oberkirche
Pfarrhof
99310 Arnstadt

Castle Museum
Schlossplatz 1
99310 Arnstadt
Tel. +49 (0) 3628 602932

Dornheim

**Freundeskreis zur
Erhaltung der TrauKirche
von Johann Sebastian
Bach in Dornheim e.V.**
Tel. +49 (0) 3628 70308
E-mail: [juergen.frey.
dornheim@gmx.de](mailto:juergen.frey@dornheim@gmx.de)
www.bach-in-dornheim.de

**Matrimonial Church of
Johann Sebastian Bach**
Hauptstrasse 1
99310 Dornheim

Eisenach

**Eisenach-Wartburg-
region Touristik GmbH**
Markt 24
99817 Eisenach
Tel. +49 (0) 3691 79230
www.eisenach.info

Bach House
Frauenplan 21
99817 Eisenach
Tel. +49 (0) 3691 79340
www.bachhaus.de

Bach Monument
Frauenplan 21
99817 Eisenach

St. George's Church
Marktplatz
99817 Eisenach

Latin School
Predigerplatz 4
99817 Eisenach

Erfurt

Tourist Information Office
Benediktsplatz 1
99084 Erfurt
Tel. +49 (0) 361 6640120
E-mail: [citytour@
erfurt-tourismus.de](mailto:citytour@erfurt-tourismus.de)
www.erfurt-tourismus.de

Augustinian Church
Augustinerstrasse 10
99084 Erfurt

Kaufmannskirche
Am Anger 80
99084 Erfurt

Predigerkirche
Predigerstrasse 4
99084 Erfurt

St. Thomas Church
Puschkinstrasse 11a
99084 Erfurt

Mühlhausen

Tourist Information Office
Ratsstrasse 20
99974 Mühlhausen
Tel. +49 (0) 3601 404770
E-mail: [service@tourist-
info-muehlhausen.de](mailto:service@tourist-info-muehlhausen.de)
www.muehlhausen.de/en

Divi Blasii Church
Untermarkt
99974 Mühlhausen

Bach Monument
Johann-Sebastian-
Bach-Platz 1a
99974 Mühlhausen

St. Mary's Church
Bei der Marienkirche
99974 Mühlhausen

City Hall
Ratsstrasse 19
99974 Mühlhausen

Ohrdruf

**Ehrenstein Castle, City
Archives and Museum**
Schlossplatz 1
99885 Ohrdruf
Tel. +49 (0) 3624 311438

St. Michael's Church spire
St.-Michaelis-Platz
99885 Ohrdruf

Protestant Church Office
(Contact for visit
to church spire)
Kirchstrasse 20
99885 Ohrdruf
Tel. +49 (0) 3624 313536

Former Bach House
Vollrathstrasse 5
99885 Ohrdruf

City Administration
Marktplatz 1
99885 Ohrdruf
Tel. +49 (0) 3624 3300

Wechmar

Bach's Ancestral Home
(Upper Baking House)
Bachstrasse 4
99869 Günthersleben-
Wechmar
Tel. +49 (0) 36256 22680
[www.bach-stammhaus-
wechmar.de](http://www.bach-stammhaus-wechmar.de)

Old School
Kirchplatz 4
99869 Günthersleben-
Wechmar

**Landhaus Studnitz –
Wechmarer
Heimatverein e.V.**
Hohenkirchenstrasse 13
99869 Günthersleben-
Wechmar

St. Vitus' church
Kirchplatz 6
99869 Günthersleben-
Wechmar

Veit Bach Mill
(Upper Mill)
Mühlenstrasse 2
99869 Günthersleben-
Wechmar

Weimar

Tourist Information Office
Markt 10
99423 Weimar
Tel. +49 (0) 3643 745-0
www.weimar.de/en

Bach Monument
Platz der Demokratie
99423 Weimar

Bastille and City Castle
Burgplatz 4
99423 Weimar

Bach's Home
Am Markt 16
99423 Weimar

St. James' Church
Am Jakobskirchhof 4
99423 Weimar

Red and Yellow Castles
Markt 15
99423 Weimar

**City Church of
St. Peter and Paul**
Herderplatz
99423 Weimar

Festivals

Bach Biennale Weimar
www.bachbiennaleweimar.de

Bach-Festival-Arnstadt
www.bach-festival.de

Eisenach Bach Festival
BACHFEST EISENACH
www.bachfest-eisenach.de

Ohrdruf Bach Festival
BACHTAGE OHRDRUF
www.bachtage-ohrdruf.de

Güldener Herbst
www.gueldener-herbst.de

Heinrich Schütz Musikfest
www.schütz-musikfest.de/eng

MDR Music Summer "Bach Places"
MDR MUSIK-SOMMER
KONZERTREIHE »BACHORTE«
www.mdr.de/musiksommer

Thuringian Bach Festival
THÜRINGER BACHWOCHE
www.thueringer-bachwochen.de/en

Thuringian Organ Summer
THÜRINGER ORGELSOMMER
www.orgelsommer.de

Playground Festival Weimar
www.playgroundfestival.de

Activities

**Bach Cycle Experience Route
on Bach's Trail**
early childhood and youth
www.bach-thueringen.de/en

Bachbybike
guided musical bicycle tours
www.bachbybike.com

Bach hike from Arnstadt to Gehren
www.wanderbares-deutschland.de

Literature

German language

HELGA BRÜCK
**Von der Apfelstädt und
der Gera zum Missouri**
500 Jahre Thüringer
Musikerfamilie Bach
Jena 2008

Das Bach Magazin
(two issues per year)
Leipzig Media GmbH

HARTMUT ELLRICH
Bach in Thüringen
Erfurt 2011

KONRAD KÜSTER
Der junge Bach
Stuttgart 1996

CHRISTOPH WOLFF
Johann Sebastian Bach
Frankfurt am Main 2014



Dornheim

Eisenach

Mühlhausen



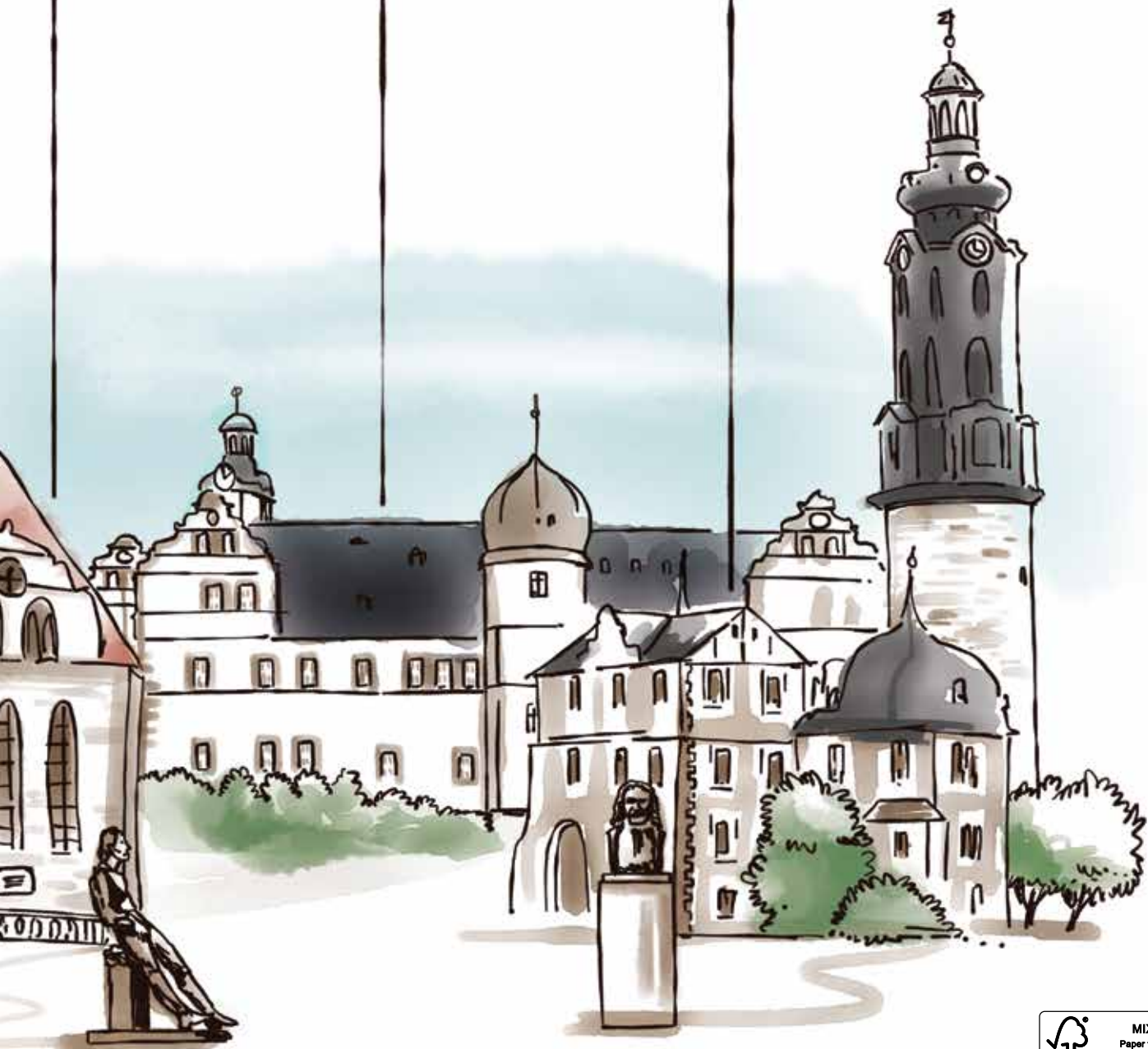
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Did you know that Johann Sebastian Bach spent half of his life in Thuringia? Or that he got into a fistfight in Arnstadt? That he spent a month under arrest in Weimar because of his “stubbornness”? Many authentic Bach sites in Eisenach, Ohrdruf, Arnstadt, Mühlhausen, Dornheim, and Weimar have survived and are awaiting your visit. Discover the charming Bach churches, get active and take the Bach Cycle Experience Route, or visit one of the many Bach festivals that take place throughout the year in Thuringia. You can find a lot of tips and events in this Bach Magazine.