



REVIEW: EDITION

## Die leidende und am Creutz sterbende Liebe Jesu

Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel (1690–1749), ed. Warwick Cole  
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Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel, born in Saxony's Erz Mountains (Erzgebirge), is one of the many outstanding German composers of the early eighteenth century. He was well travelled and had profound knowledge in theology, literature, history and the fine arts. He received his musical education in Gera and Leipzig, and soon became a sought-after composer, especially for operas, with commissions from Breslau and Naumburg. During a one-year tour to northern Italy and Rome he refined his style and had at least one of his compositions performed in Florence. After some years in Prague, an intermezzo in Bayreuth and a one-year post at the Gera court, in 1719 Stölzel became court Kapellmeister in Gotha, a position he held for the rest of his life.

Stölzel was very prolific. He contributed to all the musical genres of his time, wrote many of his librettos himself and penned several treatises on musical matters, including compositional techniques and the treatment of a text. His network was large and often based on close friendly contacts with fellow musicians. Nevertheless, most of Stölzel's works are lost (and already were by the end of the eighteenth century). None of his operas and only a few of his other large compositions survived. Thus this edition of the early passion oratorio *Die leidende und am Creutz sterbende Liebe Jesu* is more than welcome. For our knowledge of Stölzel, and of the passion oratorio of the early eighteenth century in general, this work is a treasure in many respects. It is the first such work Stölzel composed for Gotha, where it was performed in 1720, five years before his setting of Barthold Heinrich Brockes's passion oratorio, but about the same time that the Hamburg performances of Handel's, Telemann's and Mattheson's Brockes-Passions took place. For *Die leidende und am Creutz sterbende Liebe Jesu* Stölzel also wrote his own libretto, which makes the work an example of his skill in poetic-theological writing. It is based on all four gospels, though it does not use original biblical text. It would be most interesting to read this libretto alongside the famous, and well-studied, Hamburg librettos by Christian Friedrich Hunold (*Der blutige und sterbende Jesus*, 1704/1705), Johann Ulrich König (*Thränen unter dem Creutze Jesu*, 1711) and Brockes (*Der für die Sünde der Welt gemarterte und sterbende Jesus*, 1712) – all three set to music first, and maybe initiated, by Reinhard Keiser.

The present edition, by harpsichordist and Bach scholar Warwick Cole, contains a Preface, the oratorio text with an English translation, the score (including an appendix) and a critical report. It is based on a short score and a set of parts kept in the Schlossmuseum library in Sondershausen. This material was used for a Sondershausen performance in 1735 and is the only complete musical source of the Passion to be known today. Besides that source, Cole has also consulted an incomplete, and probably later (see page xi), score kept in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin; this is a full score with some cuts, some alternative settings and some arias transposed and/or slightly changed. For the text underlay, Cole has used the printed libretto from 1720, which still exists in the Forschungsbibliothek

Gotha. A secondary text source is kept in the Nuremberg Stadtbibliothek – a 1736 print which gives the work's title as *Der gläubigen Seele geistliche Betrachtung ihres leidenden Jesu*.

The music has been carefully edited. The many corrections of single notes and rhythmic irregularities listed in the Critical Notes show that the copyist's work was not very accurate. But who might this copyist have been? According to Manfred Fechner (see his introductory essay in *Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel, Brockes-Passion*, ed. Axel Weidenfels, Manfred Fechner and Ludger Rémy (Leipzig: Hofmeister, 2010), ix–x), it probably was Johann Christoph Rödiger, an old friend of Stölzel's, who in 1727 was employed as a singer and violinist in Sondershausen. Stölzel typically loaned his Gotha scores – which were sometimes themselves copies – to Rödiger, who extracted performance materials from them and sent the originals back. Cole mentions Rödiger as an important figure for Stölzel's contact with Sondershausen (ix), but he does not discuss the question of a copyist. Rödiger, as Fechner states, not only copied the works, but also adapted them for the orchestral forces at Sondershausen (which would have been the case with any other Sondershausen scribe as well). That means that we do not know how the edited material is related to Stölzel's now lost original score. To be precise, then, the music represented in this edition is the Sondershausen version of 1735, which might, or might not, be close to Gotha in 1720. The user of the edition is not informed about that.

The text underlay, as mentioned before, follows the 1720 Gotha libretto. Cole has modernized the spelling, but retained the original punctuation. One might debate whether the small slashes in the libretto print are to be read as virgules or commas. I would argue for virgules, which have a meaning distinct from that of commas and, if these kinds of punctuation were to be retained, should be given as virgules. The punctuation as given in this edition, in many cases, seems strange or even wrong to today's user. This detail notwithstanding, it is very convenient to have a separate edition of the text with English translation and some critical remarks (xiv–xxxii). It is only a pity that this edition of the libretto lacks the title-page and Preface of the original – having the Preface, in particular, in an English translation would have been helpful for scholars not familiar with eighteenth-century German. Still, the more problematic point is that Cole not only divides the work into four large parts, according to the Sondershausen partbooks, but then further subdivides the parts into a number of 'Betrachtungen' (reflections; twenty-two in total), a structure taken from the above-mentioned 1736 Nuremberg print. Neither division is in the Gotha libretto. The subdivision into twenty-two reflections is what we find in three libretto prints: Leipzig from 1734, and Nuremberg and Rudolstadt, both from 1736. In all three prints the title is changed (in addition to other text variations). It is *Der gläubigen Seele geistliche Betrachtung ihres leidenden Jesu* (Leipzig and Nuremberg) and *Geistliche und heilige Betrachtungen der gläubigen Seele uber [sic] ihren leidenden und sterbenden Jesum* (Rudolstadt) (Tatjana Schabalina, 'Texte zur Music' in *Sankt Petersburg: Gedruckte deutsche Quellen zu Werken von Komponisten des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts* (Beeskow: ortus, 2021), 835–844). Other libretto prints, such as Göttingen from 1741, keep the original title of the Passion and do not have the subdivision into 'reflections'. I see no reason to use this structure in the current edition. It is possible that Cole did so because J. S. Bach did the same in 1734, when he performed the passion in Leipzig (197).

Cole focuses a great deal on Bach. In his Preface, after some notes on Stölzel, the first section is entitled 'Stölzel and Bach' (ix–x), and only after that does he start with discussion of the edited work. The Preface is drawn from the editor's programme notes for a concert given on 31 March 2018 in Cheltenham, where the piece was performed by the Corelli Vocal Consort and Corelli Orchestra under Cole at the harpsichord (Cheltenham Coffee Concerts 2018, *Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel (1690–1749), Die Leidende und am Creutz Sterbende Liebe Jesu / The Love of Jesus, Suffering and Dying on the Cross*; programme available at [www.corelliconcerts.co.uk/assets/files/programme%20final.pdf](http://www.corelliconcerts.co.uk/assets/files/programme%20final.pdf)). It is true that Bach was in contact with the Gotha court and had contributed to the court's musical life for a long time; that one opera aria and one harpsichord suite by Stölzel appear in the *Notenbüchlein* for Anna Magdalena Bach and in the *Clavier-Büchlein* for

Wilhelm Friedemann Bach respectively; that Bach performed Stölzel's passion in Leipzig; and that Stölzel bought a copy of Bach's *Das Musicalische Opfer* for Gotha. But with the conclusion that 'it is his acquaintance with Johann Sebastian Bach that provides the most tantalizing glimpse into Stölzel's musical standing' (ix) I would not agree.

Returning to the matter of editorial principles, we find, besides the mixture of sources, some further editorial decisions that make the edition rather more a practical than a critical one. Instrument names are given in English; in recitatives, irregular bars are tacitly rebarred (see 197 for both); bass figures have been added by the editor after consulting the figures in the Sondershausen material (which were added by a later hand) and the figures in the Berlin score. The user is not informed which figures have been taken from which source and which have been added by Cole. Since A-R claims to produce critical editions, the publisher, in my view, should encourage a closer look at the printed material and sticking to stricter guidelines.

A final remark on the appendix. It is very welcome to have the three newly set pieces – one chorale and two arias – from the Berlin score in addition to the bulk that derives from the Sondershausen score. However, I wonder why other movements from the Berlin score that differ from the Sondershausen materials have been omitted, such as those that have been changed by adding ritornellos, and a revised version of the aria No. 3, 'Ach wo nehm ich Tränen her' (xi–xii).

To conclude, Warwick Cole's edition of Stölzel's Gotha passion oratorio from 1720 is a very welcome expansion of our image of Stölzel as a composer of sacred music and as a librettist. It provides a trustworthy musical text of the work that will, one hopes, initiate performances. The separate libretto edition with English translation gives scholars the opportunity to examine the text closely. Nevertheless, Cole, and A-R Editions, are not offering an entirely consistent or, one might say, modern critical edition. This is because of some editorial decisions, and some unanswered questions. Sources are mixed, additions such as those made to bass figures are done tacitly, and the question of the copyist for the main source (Sondershausen) is not discussed – meaning that the relation of this main source to the original, now lost, Gotha version of the work remains unclear. Musicians will probably love the edition. Scholars will still need to examine the sources.

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