

# DEATH EVERYDAY: THE ANNA MAGDALENA BACH BOOK OF 1725 AND THE ART OF DYING

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## ABSTRACT

*The Anna Magdalena Bach Book of 1725 is a heterogeneous collection of virtuosic and profound keyboard suites, light and often insipid dances, and a number of sacred songs whose dominant theme is death. This striking juxtaposition of the sacred and secular is hardly lessened by the fact that the songs are written in a disarmingly fashionable style which at first seems incommensurate with the existential issues addressed by the poetry. While scholars have generally seen the notebook's less demanding pieces, including the songs, as a testament to Anna Magdalena's taste for the galant style, little has been said about her apparent penchant for reflecting on and preparing for death through the medium of her personal musical notebook. By reading these poetic texts and their musical settings against the voluminous writings on the art of dying to be found in the family's theological library, this essay argues for the centrality of the ars moriendi in the Bachs' domestic life and in their music-making.*

The Anna Magdalena Bach notebook<sup>1</sup> begun in 1725 – the second of the two musical notebooks that bear her name – opens in the loftiest realms reached by eighteenth-century keyboard music, with early versions of Johann Sebastian Bach's third and sixth partitas (BWV827 and BWV830), copied out by the composer himself. After the bracing chromatic counterpoint and taxing technical demands of the closing gigue of the sixth partita (Figure 1), Bach's young wife, Anna Magdalena, makes her appearance as copyist, entering a naive minuet by an unknown composer (Figure 2). This is the first of the twenty dance pieces in the manuscript which attest to Anna Magdalena's taste for light music. Her collection even boasted a charming polonaise by the family friend and Dresden Kapellmeister Johann Adolph Hasse, one of the most famous composers in all of Europe.

Of the forty-two musical numbers in the notebook of 1725, three quarters are keyboard pieces. These include no less than four large-scale suites by J. S. Bach (the above-mentioned partitas and two of the French suites, BWV812 and 813) as well as two of Bach's most famous keyboard pieces: a prelude in C major (BWV846) and an aria in G major (BWV988), gentle delights here unburdened of their duty to introduce two towering monuments to masculine Bachian keyboard ambition – the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book 1, and the Goldberg Variations. Otherwise, the pages between the partitas (the first and second numbers in the notebook) and the French suites (numbers 30 and 31) are filled out mostly by dances: minuets (nine), polonaises (sixteen), marches (four), a musette, a rondeau and a few other kindred trifles.

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This essay is dedicated to the memory of Ronald James Alexander (1961–1990), who was a student with me in the PhD programme at Stanford University. An earlier version of the article was read at Stanford in May 2003 as one of the Ron Alexander Memorial Lectures in Musicology, a series endowed by his parents.

1 *Anna Magdalena Bach Book of 1725*, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Mus. ms. Bach P 225, number 28, BWV Anh. II 130. Modern edition: *Die Klavierbüchlein für Anna Magdalena Bach (1722 und 1725)*, ed. Georg von Dadelsen (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1957).



Figure 1 Gigue, Partita No. 6 (early version), hand of J. S. Bach. *Anna Magdalena Bach Book of 1725*, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Mus. ms. P 225, 40

In contrast to Anna Magdalena's notebook of 1722, which in the decimated form in which it survives contains only keyboard music, the longer collection, begun three years later, also includes twelve songs. Of the vocal pieces in the second notebook, five are settings of chorale melodies (one appears without its text), and seven are arias, the difference between the genres being that the arias (generally, though not always) have somewhat more florid melodies and more active bass lines; at least two of the arias (BWV508, BWV518) are by composers other than J. S. Bach. With only one exception, these vocal pieces are written on two staves with a texted soprano. The exception is Bach's chorale *Dir, dir, Jehova, will ich singen* (BWV299, number 39 in the notebook of 1725). The composer himself returned to the notebook to inscribe the four-part version of this chorale; Anna Magdalena then reduced it to a two-part setting suitable for her to sing alone at the keyboard, or perhaps to be accompanied by her husband or one of her stepsons, Wilhelm Friedemann or Carl Philipp Emanuel.

The longest of the arias in the notebook is J. S. Bach's 'Schlummert ein, ihr matten Augen' from the C minor cantata, *Ich habe genug*, BWV82, first performed in Leipzig in 1727. But the cantata was revived in an E minor version in 1731, about the time that Anna Magdalena wrote the piece into her notebook;<sup>2</sup> she domesticated the aria for her own use by removing the three lush string parts and the ritornellos and similarly transposing the piece up a major third from E flat major (its key in the original version of BWV82) to G major.<sup>3</sup> Like her two-part setting of *Dir, dir, Jehova, will ich singen*, it became a piece for treble voice.

2 *Bach-Compendium*, ed. Hans-Joachim Schulze and Christoph Wolff, 1 volume, 4 parts (Leipzig: Peters, 1986–1989), part 2, 714.

3 'Schlummert ein' appears twice in the notebook (Nos 34 and 38), first with its introductory recitative, then without it. See Georg von Dadelsen, *Kritischer Bericht to Johann Sebastian Bach: Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke*, series 5, book 4: *Die Klavierbüchlein für Anna Magdalena Bach*, 108.



Figure 2 Minuet, unknown composer, Anh. II 113, hand of Anna Magdalena Bach. *Anna Magdalena Bach Book of 1725*, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Mus. ms. P 225, 41

Though by no means the most challenging music Bach ever produced for a singer, the aria's long phrases, the wide leaps across awkward intervals and the overall length reflect Anna Magdalena's own abilities. This was not ordinary domestic vocal music for an ordinary female singer. We know that Anna Magdalena was a highly valued and highly paid singer at the Cöthen court, where Bach met her probably in 1721, and if we assume that the E minor partita, for example, was included in the notebook because she could play it (or wanted to learn how to play it), then we begin to realize that this was domestic music of the highest calibre to be performed in the Bach household by an eighteenth-century Lutheran woman of rare talent and training. That more ambitious pieces kept company in the notebook with trifling minuets and modest, pietistic arias, as well as the earliest compositional efforts of Anna Magdalena's stepson Carl Philipp Emanuel (he noted down two of his polonaises and a march, BWV Anh. 122–124, in the middle of the manuscript), reflects her interrelated roles in the Bach family: wife of the composer, mother and stepmother to his children, and musician in her own right. It would be wrong, as is so often the case in Bach scholarship, to view her as a cipher whose primary value was as a copyist of her husband's music and therefore chiefly of interest for the clues she provides to establishing that music's chronology. Rather, I see in the notebook's intertwining of the musical, the moral and the practical one of the most valuable and poignant documents of Anna Magdalena's vital position in the Bach family life.

Many of the notebook's light and charming pieces were probably copied out by Anna Magdalena in the mid-1730s, that is, at roughly the same time as the 1736 publication of Sperontes' *Singende Muse an der Pleiße*, a volume whose dance types are similar to many of those found in the *Anna Magdalena Bach Book*.<sup>4</sup> Indeed,

<sup>4</sup> Sperontes (Johann Sigismund Schulze), *Sperontes Singende Muse an der Pleiße* (Leipzig: Lustige Gesellschaft, 1736; reprinted Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1964).



Figure 3 [Johann Sigismund Schulze,] *Sperontes Singende Muse an der Pleiße* (Leipzig: Lustige Gesellschaft, 1736), frontispiece

Anna Magdalena's musical choices summon the kinds of images of galant culture to be seen on the frontispiece of the *Singende Muse* (see Figure 2). Here are the finest of Leipzig's middle class playing the clavichord, billiards and cards, smoking tobacco and drinking coffee; as far as we know, these same bourgeois affectations – with the exception of billiards and possibly cards – were enjoyed in the Bach household. The shared musical language of Sperontes' *Singende Muse* and the dances of Anna Magdalena's notebook reflect the currency of the Bach family's cultural tastes, even while the master of the house generally pursued a musical style far beyond the everyday.

Yet suddenly, in the midst of the notebook's run of often banal secular pieces, the sacred unexpectedly intrudes. After Anna Magdalena had copied out an easy piece – she left it untitled but it is clearly a fashionable polonaise in two voices (BWV Anh. II 128) – she turned to a meditation on death entitled *Bist du bei mir*. Possibly by Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel, this setting gently and reassuringly articulates the commonplace pietistic desire for an untroubled, blessed death (Example 1).

Bist du bei mir, geh ich mit Freuden  
zum Sterben und zu meiner Ruh.  
Ach, wie vergnügt wär so mein Ende,  
es drückten deine schönen Hände  
Mir die getreuen Augen zu.

DEATH EVERYDAY



Bist du bei mir, geh ich mit Freu - den zum Ster - ben und zu mei - ner

Ruh, zum Ster-ben und zu mei-ner Ruh. Bist du bei mir, geh ich mit

Freu - den zum Ster - ben und zu mei - ner Ruh, zum Ster-ben und zu mei-ner Ruh.

*Fine*

Ach, wie ver - gnügt wär so mein En - de, es drück - ten dei-ne schö - nen

Hän - de mir die ge-treu-en Au-gen zu. Ach, wie ver - gnügt wär so mein

En - de, es drück - ten dei-ne schö - nen Hän - de mir die ge-treu-en Au-gen zu.

Da Capo al Segno

Example 1 *Bist du bei mir*, BWV508 (possibly by Heinrich Stölzel)



If you are with me, I will go joyfully  
 To my death and to my rest.  
 Oh, how pleasant would be my end,  
 If you pressed your beautiful hands on me  
 And closed my faithful eyes.

As sung by Anna Magdalena, this sweetly modest music would have evoked the image of a woman dying peacefully, firm in her beliefs.

Such private domestic contemplations of mortality stand in contrast to many of the confrontations with death heard in J. S. Bach's large-scale public vocal music.<sup>5</sup> A good example is the aria 'Wie starb die Heldin so vergnügt' (How happily the heroine died), BWV198/5, from the *Trauer Ode*, composed in 1727 to a text by the leading literary figure in Bach's Leipzig, J. C. Gottsched, on the death of Saxon Electress Christiane Eberhardine (Example 2). The much loved Electress had remained true to the Lutheran faith after her husband August the Strong had opportunistically converted to Catholicism in order to gain the Polish crown in 1698; in its praise of the Electress's exemplary death, the *Trauer Ode* reflects a very Lutheran tradition of presenting those left behind with models on which to base their own subsequent deaths. Here was a woman's death to which all other women could aspire, as unswerving in their belief as Christiane Eberhardine had been in hers. Scored for two obbligato gambas accompanied by a continuo group including two lutes, and performed in Leipzig's university church before a host of dignitaries, 'Wie starb die Heldin so vergnügt' was nobly tragic, high-minded stylistically and bestowed with proportions commensurate with the dead Electress's position atop society. Thus while 'Wie starb die Heldin' depicts a model death of the kind also hoped for in *Bist du bei mir*, the two 'arias' reflect the obvious but important fact that the intimate music of domestic edification took a form quite different from that of public apotheosis.

Indeed, the stylistic ambitions of *Bist du bei mir* are only marginally more elevated than those of the dances in the notebook or in Sperontes' *Singende Muse*. Yet they are freighted with a profoundly religious concern – the contemplation of dying a blessed death. Of the twelve soprano songs in the notebook, only two set secular poetry, though, as we shall see, in one of these cases the ostensibly worldly text projects a vital religious message. Eight refer to death; four of these, including the three more elaborate songs I shall consider more closely in this article, treat death as their central topic, asking the singer to imagine her own final moments. Thus these songs encourage both preparation for and reflection on the act of dying and its consequences for the Christian singers – and listeners – in the Bach household, both young and old.

The notebook's abrupt shift of topic – from dances to death – has most often been attributed to the meandering musical predilections of Anna Magdalena and, accordingly, is taken to represent her search for expressive pieces that she might sing.<sup>6</sup> Of course, the juxtaposition of secular and sacred is by no means rare in manuscript collections of keyboard music from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; one does not have to search long to find raucous dances and bawdy drinking songs disporting themselves unapologetically in the company of devout religious melodies.<sup>7</sup> In the Susanne von Soldt Manuscript of 1599, for example, the austere rendered plaint of Psalm 130 ('Out of the depths I cry to thee') is followed by an intabulation of Lasso's *Susanne un jour*, with its decidedly blue text. In the notebook compiled by – or more likely for – the aristocratic girl Christiana Charlotte Amalia Trolle in 1702, while she was still a student at the Preetz Cloister in Schleswig-Holstein and a few years before her marriage, the copyist inscribed dozens of modish minuets

5 For more on Bach's public liturgical works devoted to themes of death and dying see Martin-Christian Mautner, *Mach einmal mein Ende gut: zur Sterbekunst in den Kantaten Johann Sebastian Bachs zum 16. Sonntag nach Trinitatis* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1997).

6 Robert Marshall, 'The Notebooks for Wilhelm Friedemann and Anna Magdalena Bach: Some Biographical Lessons', in *Essays in Musicology: A Tribute to Alvin Johnson*, ed. Lewis Lockwood and Edward Roesner (Philadelphia: American Musicological Society, 1990), 192–200.

7 See for example a list of north German/Danish tablature books with mixed contents in *Das Klavierbuch der Christiana Charlotte Amalia Trolle (1702)*, ed. Uwe Haensel (Neumünster: Karl Wachholtz, 1974), 20.



Viola da gamba 1

Viola da gamba 2

Alto

Lutes 1, 2  
Continuo

4

8

Wie starb die Hel - - - din so ver-gnügt, wie

Example 2 'Wie starb die Heldin so vergnügt', from *Trauer Ode*, BWV198, bars 1–10

before resolutely entering several chorales, only to return rather too quickly to the more appealing secular dances. To be sure, the refinements of minuet playing added value to a girl's marriage stock; perhaps because an unrelenting diet of piety might not sufficiently encourage a girl's cultivation of her musical talents at the keyboard, it was better if dance music could be complemented by pieces whose religious conviction was more obvious.<sup>8</sup> After all, piety and, by inference, chastity were greater nuptial assets than minuet playing.

But what I would like to suggest here is that Anna Magdalena Bach was not simply searching in a rather desultory way for pleasing melodies with which to fill out her personal notebook and with which to polish

8 I would like to thank my anonymous reviewer for pointing out that the Leipzig dance master Johannes Pasch (1653–1719) argued that French court dances were not sinful but rather reasonable and natural, and ultimately led to the glorification of God. Pasch, *Beschreibung wahrer Tanz-Kunst* (Frankfurt: no publisher, 1707; reprinted Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1978), 94–96. Of course, Pasch's book was a response to vigorous and ongoing attacks on dance by pietistic clerics.



her bourgeois refinements, for this explanation does not sufficiently account for her apparently disquieting affection for texts that reflect on death and dying; these sacred songs represent more than moments of pious reflection amongst the earthly distractions and delights provided by the dances. On the most superficial level such religious sentiments were potent reminders that the accoutrements of bourgeois culture in Bach's Leipzig, both public and private, flourished in the shadow of a robust theocracy: it is no coincidence that in the *Singende Muse* engraving, the Thomaskirche, one of the great symbols of Lutheran orthodoxy, glowers over the rampant pursuit of pleasure on Sperontes' terrace. I would argue, however, that the sacred arias in the *Anna Magdalena Bach Book* do more than simply attest to the sometimes vexed interplay of sacred and secular in Leipzig – in any case a simplistic opposition – but, more importantly, they speak profoundly to the moral dimensions of music-making in the Bach home, particularly the music performed there by Anna Magdalena. What emerges from the vocal pieces in the notebook is the central position of the art of dying in the Bachs' domestic musical life.

Anna Magdalena's apparent fascination with death should come as no surprise: the art of dying was one of the most important topics in the morally uplifting literature that circulated widely in Germany in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and was collected avidly by her husband.<sup>9</sup> The volumes of the Bachs' theological library ranged from biblical commentaries to frothy sectarian polemics, uplifting and exemplary sermons, daily domestic devotions, practical recommendations for good living and, crucially, for good dying. The title-page of the *Apostolische Christen-Schule* by the Lübeck superintendent August Pfeiffer, one of the most prolific of the moral instructors of the seventeenth century and a man whose works were outweighed only by those of Martin Luther on the Bachs' bookshelves, promised that through the study of these books 'a Christian can markedly improve himself both in word and in deed'.<sup>10</sup> Bach wrote down the title of this book along with two others by Pfeiffer on the cover of the 1722 notebook for Anna Magdalena.<sup>11</sup> We might view the citation of these volumes on the cover of a manuscript for Bach's new wife as a fortuitous piece of evidence indicating that in the Bach household devotional religious literature and music shared the same domestic – and, I would argue, moral – space. Many of the books devoted to personal uplift consisted of short devotional essays which could be read quickly as part of daily study; these volumes were often equipped with excellent indexes and were organized for easy access to Christian topics of concern. One can well imagine that these books would have been used much like the sacred contents of Anna Magdalena Bach's musical notebook – easily dipped into for spiritual edification, self-reflection and moral reinforcement. The songs of the notebook were both a familial resource and a personal one: they could soothe the children, even while providing a vital form of moral and musical recreation for the singer. They could entertain during moments of happiness; and they could refresh the spirit in dark times.

Among the ethical practices outlined by the books in the Bachs' library, the art of dying occupied a central position. This contemplation of, and preparation for, death was peculiar to Lutheran Germany and had its roots in the Reformation, which began in large part as a critique of papal indulgences and the related phenomenon of intercessory masses for the dead. These Roman Catholic practices were based on the notion that dead souls went directly to Purgatory; with the fate of the dead still undecided, the living could lobby on their behalf. Central to Luther's reforms was his belief that the fate of the soul was determined at death. This

9 For a critical bibliography of Bach's theological library see Robin Leaver, *Bachs theologische Bibliothek*, Beiträge zur theologischen Bachforschung 1 (Neuhausen-Stuttgart: Hänssler, 1985).

10 'daß sich dadurch ein Christ so wol in Lehr als im Leben / merklich erbauen kan.' August Pfeiffer, *Apostolische Christen-Schule* (Lübeck and Rostock: Krüger, 1695), title-page. This book went to Catharina Dorothea at her father's death. See Leaver, *Bachs theologische Bibliothek*, 92.

11 For a facsimile of the annotation see Bach, *Die Klavierbüchlein für Anna Magdalena Bach*, ed. Dadelsen, vi. It is also possible that the annotation could refer to Pfeiffer's *Evangelische Christen-Schule* (Leipzig: Frommann, 1688), a book owned by Bach as well. The other books referred to by Bach are his *Anti-Calvinismus* and his *Anti-melancholicus*. For bibliographic information on the various editions of all these books by Pfeiffer see Leaver, *Bachs theologische Bibliothek*, 92, 139, 145, 147.





theological claim carried with it the practical result that indulgences and intercessory masses were rendered useless: in this and other important respects the Reformation was, as Craig Koslofsky has argued, fundamentally a dispute about the relationship between the living and the dead.<sup>12</sup> For Lutherans such as the Bachs, the fate of the soul was the responsibility of the living individual, nurtured by the family and the church; at death the destiny of the soul was determined irrevocably. The *ars moriendi* became an essential task of an everyday life shadowed by mortality.

Indeed, another of the authors best represented in Bach's collection, the seventeenth-century Superintendent of Rostock Heinrich Müller, warned readers of his *Liebes-Kuß* – Bach among them – that 'Above all things, know that you must die.'<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the anonymous aria *Gedenke doch, mein Geist* in Anna Magdalena's notebook concludes: 'Inscribe these words in your heart and breast: you must die.' Writers such as Pfeiffer and Müller ceaselessly reminded their readership that death could come at any time: 'Heut gesund und starck / morgen todt im Sarck.'<sup>14</sup> (Today healthy and strong; tomorrow dead and in your coffin.) Anna Magdalena was certainly not too young to harbour such concerns: these songs on death were entered into her notebook in the 1730s, when she was herself in her thirties. Bach's first wife, Maria Barbara, had died in 1720 at the age of thirty-five; Bach had returned from a trip to Carlsbad to find her dead and already buried.

Given the ubiquitous uncertainty of life's duration, Bach's moral library urged constant preparation for death: damnation was the penalty for deferring maintenance of the soul. The central tenet of Lutheran orthodoxy was that faith in Jesus was the single source of salvation; this faith could not waver at the moment of death, when all was decided. While no one could help but fear death at times, with proper preparation, faith in Jesus would lead the believer to a blessed eternity. Writers such as Müller often indulged their lurid fascination with the terrors surrounding the death beds of the damned and the unprepared: in these scenarios snapping lions, gnawing worms, ravenous rats await the doomed just beyond the threshold of life. Müller urged his readers to entertain 'thoughts on death' (*Sterbens-Gedanken*) every day if they hoped to avoid such a fate; these thoughts equipped the Christian with the spiritual armour to resist the mortal temptations of the devil, relying on Jesus during the final struggle played out on the deathbed.<sup>15</sup> Thus prepared, the Lutheran could even allow himself to yearn for death; this yearning was, of course, a hallmark of Pietism, and coloured the Bach family's articulation of the *ars moriendi* as reflected in the private domain of Anna Magdalena's notebook as well as in many of her husband's public vocal works.<sup>16</sup>

Several authors in the Bach library supported Luther's claim that the contest between eternal salvation and eternal damnation would be decided in the last possible moment of earthly life; thus the *ars moriendi* trained one to remain strong – like the Saxon Electress eulogized by Bach and Gottsched – until the very

12 Craig Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the Dead: Death and Ritual in Early Modern Germany, 1450–1700* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2000), 40–77.

13 Heinrich Müller, *Vermehrter und durchgehends verbesserter Himmlischer Liebes-Kuß oder Göttliche Liebes-Flamme* (Frankfurt am Main: Balthasar Christoph Wuste, 1676; reprinted Nuremberg: Endter, 1732), 677, 679. Of course, Bach set Luther's version of Psalm 90.12 – 'Lehre uns bedenken, dass wir sterben müssen' (Teach us to realize that we must die) – in the *Actus tragicus* (BWV106, 2b). See also Mautner, *Mach einmal main Ende gut*, 103–104.

14 Heinrich Müller, *Geistliche Erquickstunden* (Frankfurt am Main: Wust, 1708), 101.

15 Müller, *Liebes-Kuß*, 672, 676.

16 Scott Milner, "'Süße Todesstunde' or 'Mit Fried und Freud': Reformation Theology and the Lutheran 'Art of Dying' in Two Bach Cantatas", *Bach* 31/1 (2000), 34–57, especially 38–42. Milner shows that through the course of the seventeenth century a slight drift was evident in many theological writings away from a stern unyielding conception of justification – that salvation could come through faith alone – towards a more welcoming view of personal initiative in helping to determine the fate of the soul; this shift brought with it increased validation of the *ars moriendi* in Lutheran practice. David Hill also examines the ambiguities between Luther's view of death and later, more optimistic conceptions; he argues that Bach himself recognized and confronted musically the different theological positions with respect to death staked out by Luther and later seventeenth-century theologians. David Hill, 'Thinking of Damnation: J. S. Bach's Cantata 161 and Luther's Sermon on Preparing to Die', *Journal of Musicological Research* 16/1 (1996), 17–39.



end.<sup>17</sup> Müller and others offered concrete suggestions intended to prepare their readers for the gruelling minutes, hours, even days of dying; these recommendations ranged from the recitation of daily prayers beseeching God to ensure belief in the last hour (*letztes Stündlein*) to the memorizing of scriptural dicta and their glosses. Müller asserted that the wisdom of such passages could be more firmly entrenched in the mind by coupling them with melodies; the chorale was the favoured musical form of the Lutheran *ars moriendi*, but hardly less valuable were strophic sacred songs, a genre energetically cultivated by Müller and many of the other authors represented so heftily in the Bachs' library.

As the leading musician in a seat of Lutheran orthodoxy, Bach had given his imprimatur to one such enterprise: Schemelli's *Musicalisches-Gesangbuch* of 1736. The contributors to the *Gesangbuch* – Bach among them – shared with other producers of moral literature and music the belief that songs were a vital medium for personal religious instruction in 'life, suffering and death' (*Leben, Leiden und Sterben*).<sup>18</sup> As was typical of such collections, the introduction to the *Gesangbuch* made clear that the contents were to be used not only in church but also for domestic devotions, both alone and in the company of others; the melodies were to be drawn on for daily singing, and the teachings they conveyed were to be discussed and taken to heart. Bach provided the basso continuo parts for nearly seventy of the melodies in the *Gesangbuch*, and he wrote at least two of them, one of which is found among the section of 'Songs of Dying' (*Sterbelieder*). This is Bach's setting of *Komm süßer Tod* (BWV478),<sup>19</sup> whose musical style is similar to several of the Anna Magdalena Bach notebook songs, and whose text introduces many of the same tropes of death: the anticipated departure of the human soul from the travails and miseries of the world, the yearning for the bliss of eternal rest and the shutting of tired (that is, dead) eyes by the hand of Jesus.

The reflections on death found in Anna Magdalena's notebook represent the kind of committed articulation of the *ars moriendi* advocated in the literature on moral uplift produced by Pfeiffer and others and given musical form in sacred song collections like the Schemelli *Gesangbuch*. Aided by the proven spiritual power of music, articles of belief were to be inscribed so deeply in the soul that they could not be erased during the final assault of the devil: strengthened by vigilant rehearsal, the sedulous practitioner of the *ars moriendi* would face death with fearless Christian resolve – the kind of attitude we have already heard gently proclaimed in *Bist du bei mir*, in which death is as little to be feared as sleep.

The sacred songs of the *Anna Magdalena Bach Book* project a sense of domestic calm and compassion by drawing repeatedly on this death-as-sleep trope. The literature of moral uplift frequently praised the restorative power of sleep for true believers. Luther's theological alternative to Purgatory had been to construe death as a sleep from which the transfigured body, reunited with its soul, would be awakened on the Last Day.<sup>20</sup> Exploiting the metaphorical resonance of the warming embrace of sleep, the literature in Bach's library compared the grave to a bed, the dirt to sheets; waking up after a good night's sleep provided a foretaste of the resurrection of the body at the Last Day.<sup>21</sup> By contrast, the godless were troubled at night, just as they would be tormented in eternity. The pious preparation for nightly sleep served as an intimate rehearsal for the real end of life. Heinrich Müller urged the believer to memorize comforting passages

17 See for example Pfeiffer's *Apostlische Christen-Schule*, 242. I discuss the preparation for the battle with death in my book *Bach and the Meanings of Counterpoint* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 6–9.

18 Friedrich Schultze, *Musicalisches Gesangbuch*, ed. G. C. Schemelli (Leipzig: B. C. Breitkopf, 1736; reprinted Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1976), unpaginated preface, at printer's mark 4.

19 Schemelli, *Gesangbuch*, 590–591. Bach also composed the melody and bass for *Dir, dir, Jehova, will ich singen* (Schemelli, *Gesangbuch*, 259); the same melody with alternative harmonization appears in the two versions in the *Anna Magdalena Bach Book*. This further attests to the affinities between the sacred songs of the two collections.

20 The notion of death as sleep is articulated, for example, in Luther's chorale *Mit Fried und Freud' ich fahr dahin*. I discuss this chorale and its theological implications in my article 'Towards an Allegorical Interpretation of Buxtehude's Funerary Counterpoints', *Music & Letters* 80/2 (1999), 183–206.

21 Müller, *Erquickstunden*, 74



(*Trost-Sprüchlein*) and recite them while going to sleep.<sup>22</sup> Müller was recommending nightly prayer, but he was also using ‘sleep’ figuratively to refer to death. Moral writers often drew on nurturing motherly imagery to convey a sense of the sweet rest of God that would be the eternal dividend of a pious death: thus the dying soul might be depicted as a sick child who, as Müller put it, surely finds his ‘best rest on the lap and at the breast of his mother.’<sup>23</sup>

The songs of the *Anna Magdalena Bach Book* articulate this death-as-rest metaphor through a nurturing idiom which in this context I would like to think of as maternal: I hear in *Bist du bei mir* (Example 1) a comforting affect which might conjure up the image of a mother putting her child to sleep. The song’s regular phrase structures and bass line impart a reassuring quality. Repeated notes, like those leading up to the stressed word *Ruh* (rest), provided a typical device for contemporary German song composers to evoke sleep.<sup>24</sup> The rocking quaver figure in bars 5 and 6 of the vocal line occurs exactly where the text equates death with sleep and is repeated while the harmony changes above the pulsing E♯, and then F, below it. This same figure appears transposed up a fourth in bars 14 and 15, only a tone higher in bars 23 and 24 and again at original pitch in bars 32 and 33; in these last two instances the text describes how the hand of Jesus will press the singer’s eyes closed at the very moment of death. Thus the lullaby effect of the hypnotic bass and the lulling, back-and-forth, motion of the soprano take place each time the imagery of death as sleep appears in the text.

Likewise, the gently rocking bass line of *Gedenke doch, mein Geist* (Example 3) is attuned to a text which describes death as sleep. Although the melody of *Gedenke doch* is occasionally troubled by chromatic inflections depicting both the pain of death and the poignancy of loss, the overall affect is one of reassurance. Again we encounter the familiar soporific gestures of contemporary German song:<sup>25</sup> the persistent repeated notes in the tenor range (mostly b♭, and occasionally e♭) heard on the offbeats a crotchet apart in all but three bars of the song both echo the funeral bells referred to in the text and conjure up the lullaby that accompanies the singer to her final rest. The closing line of the song enacts the memorization prescribed by Müller: ‘Write these words in your heart: remember that you must die’ – these are the thoughts that accompany the believer as she imagines falling into the metaphorical death that is sleep. The nightly lapse into sleep presages death itself, and the lullaby welcomes the singer or listener into blissful realms.<sup>26</sup>

Gedenke doch, mein Geist, zurücke  
 Ans Grab und an den Glockenschlag,  
 Da man mich wird zur Ruh begleiten,  
 Auf daß ich klüglich sterben mag.  
 Schreib dieses Wort in Herz und Brust:  
 Gedenke, daß du sterben muß.

22 Müller, *Liebes-Kuß*, 691–692.

23 ‘so hats doch die allerbeste Ruhe in dem Schooß / und bey den Brüsten seiner Mütter.’ Müller, *Liebes-Kuß*, 358–359. For similar imagery in a music book in the Bach library see Schemelli, *Gesangbuch*, 565, 581.

24 I am thinking specifically of settings of Friederich von Hagedorn’s 1731 poem ‘An den Schlaf’, in particular one by Johann Valentin Görner, a Hamburg musician with Leipzig connections and a man J. S. Bach probably knew. In the song Görner produces a lullaby effect through the familiar pulsing repeated quavers in the bass. See Görner, *Sammlung Neuer Oden und Lieder*, part 2 (Hamburg: J. C. Bohn, 1744), number 2 (page 66). A gently walking bass line – as is heard in much of *Bist du bei mir* – was also used by Bach family friend G. P. Telemann in setting Hagedorn’s poem (*Vier und zwanzig, theils ernsthafte, theils scherzende, Oden* (Hamburg: Christian Herold, 1741), number 5). Giovannini’s setting of the same Hagedorn poem also makes use of repeated bass quavers, mixing in occasional rocking figures as well; this song appears in J. F. Gräfe, *Sammlung verschiedener und auserlesener Oden*, 4 volumes (Halle: no publisher, 1737–1741), volume 3, number 19. All these songs are reprinted in Ernst Otto Linder, *Geschichte des deutschen Liedes im XVIII. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1871), 103, 108–109, 115.

25 See especially the setting of ‘An den Schlaf’ by Giovannini referred to in the previous footnote.

26 For more on the *ars moriendi*, memorization and falling asleep see my *Bach and the Meanings of Counterpoint*, 10–11.



Ge -

den - ke doch, mein Geist, zu - rük - ke ans Grab und an - den Glock - ken - schlag,

da man - mich wird zur Ruh be - glei - ten, auf daß ich klüg - lich

ster - ben mag. Schreib die - ses Wort in

Herz und Brust: Ge - den - ke, daß du ster - ben muß.

Example 3 *Gedenke doch, mein Geist*, BWV 509

Reflect back my soul,  
 On your grave and the tolling of the bells.  
 That I will be accompanied to my rest,  
 So that I can die wisely.  
 Write these words in my heart and breast:  
 Remember that you must die.

The aria 'Schlummert ein, ihr matten Augen' (Example 4) is yet another death lullaby; the pulsing bass that begins in the first bar is perfectly gauged to enhance the text's invitation to sleep. From the end of bar



Schlum - mert ein, ihr mat - ten Au - gen, fal - let\_ sanft und se - lig zu, schlum -

- mert ein, schlum - mert ein, schlum - mert ein, ihr mat - ten Au - gen, fal - let sanft und

se - lig zu. Schlum - - mert ein, ihr mat - ten Au - gen, fal - let sanft und

se - lig zu, fal - - let sanft und se - lig zu.

Welt, ich blei - be nicht mehr hier, hab ich doch\_ kein Teil an\_ dir,

*Fine*

Example 4 'Schlummert ein, ihr matten Augen', BWV 82/3 (version for soprano and keyboard from *Anna Magdalena Bach Book*, 1725), bars 1–22

4 the vocal line, too, intones more slowly repeated notes – crotchets instead of quavers – to the words 'Schlummert ein', thus simultaneously enacting the onset of sleep and encouraging the listener towards metaphorical slumber, that is, blissful death. Interestingly, Anna Magdalena finished neither version in the notebook; the first she broke off when, after omitting the ritornellos of the A section, she discovered that the instrumental interludes were indispensable in the B section. In the second version in the notebook the bass breaks off after nine bars of the B section. Thus, the aria could not ever have been performed in its entirety from the notebook itself, though one could certainly imagine Anna Magdalena singing only the A section in the Bach household; in such a partial version it would assume the proportions of the other pietistic arias in the volume. Indeed, in this more modest domestic presentation, 'Schlummert ein' exhibits



even more distinctly its stylistic affinities with the sacred song. The largely syllabic declamation, the slow-moving harmonic rhythm and the lulling bass line project a maternal calm even as they evoke the ‘sleep of death’.

The appoggiaturas at phrase ends and the rondeau form of the piece also betray galant proclivities. But if we imagine the fully realized version of the ideal aria, we see that this courtly form inspires Bach to a penetrating exploration of the dialectical nature of death as described in his library: the rondeau moves between evocations of the calming prospect of sleep (that is, death) and the harmonically more turbulent couplets that bemoan the burdens of life – ‘Hier muß ich Elend bauen’ (Here I must cultivate misery) – and ecstatically anticipate the joys of heaven – ‘dort werd ich schauen süßen Friede’ (there I will behold sweet peace) – before, at last, returning to the blissful drowsiness of the refrain.

Schlummert ein, ihr matten Augen,  
Fallet sanft und selig zu!

Go to sleep, you tired eyes,  
Gently and blessedly close.

Though a pious family, the Bachs clearly did not spend all their time engaged in moral instruction: as we have seen, the galant affectations were theirs as well, but these nominally secular pursuits also provided the opportunity for considerations of death in *Anna Magdalena Bach Book*. The strophic song *Erbauliche Gedanken eines Tobackrauchers* (Uplifting Thoughts of a Tobacco-Smoker), set in an engaging and up-to-date style, is a reflection on mortality redolent of the *ars moriendi*. The song appears first in the manuscript in D minor, perhaps in the hand of Anna Magdalena’s stepson Gottfried Heinrich Bach, and then in a version in G minor (BWV515a), in which the melody and text were noted down by Anna Magdalena, with the bass line added by Johann Sebastian.<sup>27</sup> The poem was also set elsewhere by the family friend and fellow tobacco enthusiast Georg Philipp Telemann.<sup>28</sup> The text presents a startling opening gambit: the smoker settles down to a good pipe only to have his thoughts quickly turn towards death:

So oft ich meine Tobacks-Pfeife,  
mit gutem Knaster angefüllt,  
zur Lust und Zeit ergreife,  
so gibt sie mir ein Trauerbild—  
Und füget diese Lehre bei,  
Daß ich derselben ähnlich sei.

Whenever I take up my pipe  
Filled with good tobacco  
In order to pass the time happily,  
A picture of sadness fills me,  
And includes this lesson,  
That I am just like it [the pipe and the tobacco].

<sup>27</sup> *Bach-Compendium*, ed. Hans Joachim Schulze and Christoph Wolff, part 4, 1649. For the relationship between the aria ‘Schlummert ein’ in Anna Magdalena’s notebook of 1725 and Cantata 82 see Dadelson, ‘Die Klavierbüchlein für Anna Magdalena Bach’, in *Kritischer Bericht*, 108.

<sup>28</sup> Ingeborg Allihn, ‘Wie “moralisch” ist das Toback-Rauchen? “Erbauliche Gedanken” zu Johann Sebastian Bachs Aria “So oft ich mein Tobacks-Pfeife” (BWV515)’, in *Über Leben, Kunst und Kunstwerke. Aspekte musikalischer Biographie: Johann Sebastian Bach in Zentrum*, ed. Christoph Wolff (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1999), 197. The poem shares its first line with song 99 from *Die singende Muse*; after this the texts diverge.



So oft ich mei - ne To - backs - Pfei - fe,  
Zeit - ver - treib - er - grei - se,

mit gu - tem Kna - ster an - ge - füllt, zur Lust und  
so gibt sie mir ein Trau - er

2.  
bild und fü - get die - se Leh - re bei,

1. 2.  
daß ich der - sel - ben ähn - lich sei, sei.

Example 5 *Erbauliche Gedanken eines Tobackrauchers*, BWV 515a

The second strophe, which, along with the five subsequent strophes, was inserted into the manuscript later, begins to fill out this portentous analogy:<sup>29</sup>

Die Pfeife stammt von Ton und Erde,  
Auch ich bin gleichfalls draus gemacht.  
Auch ich muß einst zur Erde werden.

The pipe comes from clay and earth;  
I, too, am made of the same.  
I, too, must one day turn to dust.

With this allusion to *Genesis* 3.19 – ‘denn du bist Erde und sollst zu Erde werden’ (For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return)<sup>30</sup> – the singer freely acknowledges that the act and instruments of smoking are

<sup>29</sup> See Dadelsen, *Kritischer Bericht*, 91.

<sup>30</sup> I would like to thank yet again one of my anonymous readers for pointing out the allusion to *Genesis* and for suggestions with the translation of this strophe from *Erbauliche Gedanken* so as to bring out the allusion. This reader's expertise and insights were of great help throughout.



ephemeral, and this observation quickly spawns a further succession of analogies with the transitory nature of life: a new pipe is white just as the smoker's newly dead corpse will be before it turns black like an old pipe; the smoke disappears in the air as quickly as earthly life, and the ash that remains inspires thoughts of the skeleton turned to ash after long years underground; and, finally, the packing of the tobacco with a bare finger ignites thoughts of the much greater heat of Hell. After spending six strophes indulging in this fatalistic reverie, the poet arrives at the conclusion that these thoughts have none the less been, and always are, rewarding, uplifting: they are *erbauliche Gedanken* – a phrase directly borrowed from the moral literature – and in spite of the inevitable path of his thoughts towards death, the smoker enjoys the pipe in complete contentment. Indeed, the text describes the whole exercise of tobacco-fuelled reflection on life and death as a kind of *Andacht*, that is, the genre of fruitful contemplation to be found in so many books devoted to moral uplift.<sup>31</sup>

In an essay on the morality of smoking and musical settings devoted to the topic, Ingeborg Allihn traces the transformation of the status of tobacco from seventeenth-century condemnations of smoking as a sign of idleness, and therefore the thin end of the devil's wedge, to what became in Bach's time its legitimization not only as an aid to meditative reflection, but as a vital form of spiritual recreation.<sup>32</sup> This transformation was bound up with the rise of a middle class and the very notion of leisure time; again recall the *Singende Muse* terrace. These are the kinds of consumers to whom Bach directed his own *Clavier-Übung* in language virtually identical with that used by Sperontes, when he promised his buyers 'keyboard practice and spiritual refreshment' (*Clavier-Übung und Gemüths-ergötzung*). Even in Sperontes' *Singende Muse* one encounters occasional references to the fleeting nature of life, and these can be seen as a kind of easy appropriation of the discourse of the *ars moriendi* that was gradually losing its grip on Lutheran domestic life even in orthodox centres such as Leipzig.<sup>33</sup> But while some songs in *Die singende Muse* are self-indulgent reflections on the futility of earthly existence, nowhere in that volume is there any reference to God or to the traditional Lutheran arts of blessed dying. Nowhere in the 'Uplifting Thoughts of a Tobacco Smoker' nor in Sperontes' *Singende Muse* is there any mention of Jesus as an immediate cure for lonely musings or as the ultimate redeemer. In the 'Uplifting Thoughts' the act of smoking provides both the cause of and the short-term remedy for incipient melancholia; larger matters of salvation are to be deferred at least until the pipe is finished. Thus the galant reflections on death in the notebook record the pursuit not only of piety but of pleasure; study, too, has become a form of recreation, not only a preparation for eternity but a means of earthly renewal.

It might be argued that the appearance of a song concerned with tobacco smoking seems to inscribe once again the masculine presence of J. S. Bach in the notebook, just as the partitas and the single example of four-part counterpoint in his hand had done. Yet aside from the apparently gendered title (*Raucher* instead of *Raucherin*), the range of the melody fits a treble voice, a fact confirmed by the soprano clef (used for treble voices in Bachian practice); in addition, no reference is made in the body of the text to the sex of the singer. Indeed, Allihn points out that in Bach's time women, too, enjoyed smoking. Thus one can properly ask if Anna Magdalena might herself have been a smoker – a *Tobackraucherin* and singer who often entertained thoughts of death.

If we are to follow the lead of our Tobacco Smoker, even the most diverting of activities often circles back towards reflections on mortality. This penchant for a leisurely, but committed, contemplation of death resonates with the grave, reflective quality of, for example, Bach's sarabandes from the first French suite (BWV812) and the sixth partita (BWV830), both of which are to be found in the *Anna Magdalena Bach Book of 1725*: with their elegiac grandeur and affinity with the traditions of the French tombeau, these undeniably profound pieces might also summon thoughts of death and in this way provide a viable form of spiritual refreshment (*Gemüths-Ergötzung*) of the kind Bach advertised on the title-page of the published version of

31 Müller's *Erquickstunden* (Hours of Refreshment) is a good example of this.

32 Allihn, 'Wie "moralisch" ist das Toback-Rauchen?', 194–209.

33 See, for example, Sperontes, *Die singende Muse an der Pleiße*, number 47.





the partitas as the first part of his *Clavier-Übung* series. One might go so far as to say that, with their excruciatingly poignant dissonances, melancholic chromatic harmonies and persuasive rhetoric of hesitation, these nominally secular pieces project a sense of earthly loss, even while offering, especially in the final quiet of their long-resisted cadences, a foretaste of eternal rest; indeed, the term ‘refreshment’ (*Ergötzung*) appears frequently in the literature of the *ars moriendi* to describe the renewal of Heaven itself.<sup>34</sup> In the theocratic world of the Bachs’ Leipzig one could contemplate death according to the methods outlined by the venerable theologians of the seventeenth century while at the same time and without contradiction indulging in mortal reflections in galant musical style as a form of leisure.

Notwithstanding the implicit assumption of the scholarly literature devoted to Bach’s theological library – that its contents were the sole province of the paterfamilias Bach – I am inclined to view these books of moral uplift as a domestic resource available to all members of the Bach household; directly, or indirectly through Bach’s paternal and matrimonial influence, the consultation of this literature and the singing of devotional songs such as those in Anna Magdalena’s notebook could well have been an integral part of the family’s cultivation of the *ars moriendi*. The theological books, indeed, were intended for both a male and female readership and addressed themes relevant to the daily lives of both sexes; accordingly, these volumes were divided more or less equally between Bach’s heirs regardless of gender. To give but one example, Bach’s first child, Catharina Dorothea, received among other books from her father’s estate a volume entitled *Nuptialia*, a collection of wedding sermons by August Pfeiffer;<sup>35</sup> as I noted earlier, three of his books are listed on the title-page of Anna Magdalena’s first notebook. Poignantly, Pfeiffer’s guide to domestic and married life became Dorothea’s property when she was forty-one and single; like three of her four sisters who survived to adulthood, Catharina Dorothea never married.

This is not the place to consider fully what this grim volume might have to tell us about the marriage of Johann Sebastian Bach and Anna Magdalena Wilcke. Suffice it to say that Pfeiffer never tires of informing his listeners and readers that death hovers over every couple, whether freshly united or near the end of decades of married life. Pfeiffer’s wedding homiletics do not indulge in much joy; in the nuptial sermon that opens the book he draws a vivid picture of the bereft Abraham mourning over the body of his dead wife, Sarah. For Pfeiffer, the death of spouses and children is a ubiquitous fact of earthly existence that should not be shied away from even at a wedding celebration; in an age of high infant mortality rates, Pfeiffer darkly warns couples of the likely death of at least some of their future offspring. In the course of marriage, preaches Pfeiffer as he officiates at a wedding, there will be many crosses to bear within the home (he calls these *Haus-Creutze*); one of the heaviest and most painful of these will be the death of children. ‘Can a woman forget her baby,’ he asks, especially having endured childbirth, the pain of which is the legacy of Eve’s sin?<sup>36</sup> The answer is, of course, that she cannot forget, and Pfeiffer goes on to dramatize the anguished sighs of devout, devoted parents grieving over lost children: ‘Oh, [my heavenly father,] here are your children, that you have given me. Oh, I hereby give them over to you.’<sup>37</sup> Pfeiffer and other evangelical wedding preachers claimed the premature death of children as a blessing, since the sin and torment of a long earthly life would be spared them; these young souls went unblemished directly to Heaven.<sup>38</sup> For Pfeiffer, it is the death of children that sends the clearest message to the parents that they must die as well. Such crosses were to be borne with belief and through careful preparation for one’s own death.

But Pfeiffer could not ignore the anguish and pain such loss inspired, and he offers his readers hope as well, presenting practical ways to battle despair and foster faith. In *Anti-melancholicus*, one of the three books by Pfeiffer whose titles were jotted down by Bach on the title-page of Anna Magdalena’s first notebook of

34 For example Schemelli, *Gesangbuch*, 565.

35 August Pfeiffer, *Nuptialia Oder Hauß- und Ehe-Schul* (Nuremberg: Abraham von Werth, 1702).

36 ‘Kan auch ein Weib ihres Kindleins vergessen[?]’. Pfeiffer, *Nuptialia*, 151.

37 ‘Ach / hier sind deine Kinder / die du mir gegeben hast; Ach / hier übergebe ich sie dir wieder.’ Pfeiffer, *Nuptialia*, 151.

38 Johann Ludwig Hartmann, *Hochzeit-predigten* (Giessen: Albrecht Otto Faber, 1670), 477.



1722, the prolific Lübeck theologian writes quite movingly in the voice of a grieving parent about the meaning and consequence of the death of a child:

None the less praise be to God, that he left me such a child of this kind for so long, and granted me this great joy for a while on earth. This shall not be cancelled through temporal death, but only postponed a short time. Through God's grace and blessing, I have, however, done what I could, and enriched heaven by one soul. I will do the same one day, and in His time find again my child with perfect body and soul in heaven.<sup>39</sup>

Pfeiffer offered the grieving parent the prospect of an ultimate reunion with the dead child as a way of keeping melancholy at bay – the ultimate purpose of this book and one of the main concerns of his domestic pastoral programme. With uplifting messages such as these, messages that could only be strengthened by song, the mourning parent could concentrate on the rewards of Heaven rather than the earthly loss of beloved children.

The death of children was a common topic not only of Lutheran sermons and devotional literature but of many other song collections as well. A particularly moving example is to be found in Johann Krieger's collection of strophic songs to texts by the Naumburg poet and dramatist Christian Weise, *Neue Musicalische Ergetzlichkeit*, published in Leipzig in 1684.<sup>40</sup> In his preface Krieger wrote that he hoped the songs would be used not only in the church, but also at table, and 'especially in small and quiet company' (*bey enger und stiller Compagnie*). It is this last context that one imagines for the twenty-fourth song from the first part of Krieger's collection, 'Begräbnüß-Andacht / bey der Leiche eines lieben Kindes' (Burial Prayer at the Corpse of a Beloved Child). The song's nine heart-rending strophes are delivered in the voice of the parent who mourns that half of his or her heart is already in heaven, since the child is dead, having had only a few hours on earth. Finally the narrator hopes that his or her own death will be like a 'quiet children's sleep' (*stiller Kinder Schlaff*), and she admits that although her body is still on earth, her thoughts are already in Heaven. Thus the song uses the final sleep of the child as a model for the parent's own subsequent death and as a prelude to the return of the child to parental arms when both are in Heaven.

In contrast to the story of Abraham and Sarah, Anna Magdalena would certainly have imagined that her husband, sixteen years her senior, was likely to die before she did. But Pfeiffer's stern vision of domestic life aside, she could have been excused for hoping to be spared the loss of so many children. Of the thirteen children Anna Magdalena gave birth to, only six outlived her; of her first eight children, born between 1723 and 1732, only two survived beyond the age of four. Her first child, Christiana Sophia Henrietta (1723–1726), died soon after turning three; her second, Gottfried Heinrich (1724–1763), was musically gifted and lived a longer life, but was mentally handicapped; the third, Christian Gottlieb (1725–1728), died at two and a half. The little girl and boy who died were, presumably, walking and speaking, and capable of a full array of emotions from anger to love to sadness. In 1733 Anna Magdalena's daughter Regina Johanna died at the age of four and a half, probably around the time many of these death lullabies were copied into her notebook.

39 'Gelobt sei dennoch Gott / Daß er mir ein solch Kind von guter Art so lange gelassen / und mir die hertzliche Freude eine Zeitlang auff Erden gegönnet hat: Dieselbe soll durch den zeitlichen Tod nicht auffgehoben / sondern nur auff eine kleine Zeit auffgeschoben sein. Ich habe durch Gottes Gnade und Segen dennoch das Meinige getan / und den Himmel umb eine Seele vermehret. Dieselbe werde ich dermaleins / ja auch zu seiner Zeit mein auf Leib und Seele vollkommlich im Himmel wieder finden.' August Pfeiffer, *Anti-melancholicus* (Leipzig: Gleditsch, 1684), part 1, 344–345.

40 Johann Krieger, *Neue Musicalische Ergetzlichkeit* (Leipzig: Johann Köler, 1684; reprinted Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1999). Another example of a devotional song that considers the theme of dead children is the 'Christerlicher Eltern Kinder-Andacht' (Christian Parents' Prayer for Children) from the same volume. Another powerful pair of examples is to be found in Paul Gerhard, *Geistliche Andachten* (Berlin: Runge, 1667; reprinted Bern: Francke, 1975), with music by Johan Georg Ebeling, 166–169. This is a pair of songs that considers the death of a child both from the perspective of the dead child in heaven and from that of the grieving parent: 'Trost-Gesang in der Persohn eines verstorbenen Kindes' (Song of Comfort in the Voice of a Dead Child) and 'Der betrübte Vater tröstet sich über seinen nunmehr seligen Sohn' (The Sorrowful Father Comforts Himself about his Deceased Son).



Thus by the time the last of these songs was entered, Anna Magdalena had had much brutal experience of her own infants' sleep as death.

Indeed, sick and dying children were the central fact of Anna Magdalena's first decade of marriage. As her notebook filled with music, the number of her dead children inexorably increased. Given the mortality all around her, one wonders if Anna Magdalena used the songs of the 1725 notebook as actual lullabies, that is, whether they were used by this busy mother-musician for the practical purpose of putting her children to sleep and for comforting them while ill, even fatally so. When she sang songs filled with sleep-as-death metaphors she knew that her children might not wake up. In this scenario the songs present their messages with even greater power, re-enacting the prayer of the mother at the cribside, following the Lutheran tradition in which family and friends often made music around the deathbed to usher the dying out of this world and into the next. Anna Magdalena's songs were ideally suited to prepare, to console, to commemorate; they could well have been chosen precisely for these purposes. Beyond the immediate practical value of comforting infants, the singing of these songs also attended to the surviving Bach children's moral uplift while at the same time cultivating that of the singer herself. Certainly, whenever Anna Magdalena sang these pieces in the tight quarters of the cantor's apartments in the Thomasschule, children of all ages were bound to hear her: Anna Magdalena's last child, Regina Susanna, was born in 1742, and was only eight at the time of her father's death.

But Anna Magdalena's songs were not only uplifting in moral terms because they helped prepare her and her family for a good death and offered solace to surviving siblings; even as they comforted those on earth, these songs also transported the thoughts of the singer and listeners up towards the domain of the departed. To outlive your own children was to look forward all the more fervently to your own death, when your own death lullaby would be heard, and Jesus would gently press your eyes closed just as you had done for your own children. To sing lullabies about death was to anticipate your reunion with all the members of your family in Heaven.