

bach

PRESS RELEASE

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300 YEARS OF BACH IN LEIPZIG

Leipzig celebrates Bach's inauguration as Thomaskantor

2023/001 — 10 February 2023

In 1723, Johann Sebastian Bach took up the post of Thomaskantor in Leipzig. 2023 marks the 300th anniversary of this momentous occasion. The composer worked in the trade fair city for 27 years and wrote most of his works here; St. Thomas' Church became his final resting place. Institutions the Bach Archive, Leipzig City History Museum and THOMANERCHOR Leipzig, as well as Bach's two churches in Leipzig, St. Thomas' and St. Nicholas', will be honouring the composer with a wide-ranging programme.

With the start of Bach's incumbency in Leipzig began the most productive period of his life. From the 1st Sunday after Trinity 1723 to the Feast of the Trinity 1724, the newly appointed Thomaskantor performed nothing but his own works in the church services at St. Thomas' and St. Nicholas': 63 cantatas in all, 38 of which were new compositions. The musician presented an incredibly rich and complex musical cosmos to the people of Leipzig.

The *Bach300 – 300 Years of Bach in Leipzig* anniversary year officially opened on 9 February with a presentation and musical programme in the building of the Representation of the Free State of Saxony to the Federal Government. Minister President Michael Kretschmer stressed the following point: *»His inauguration as Thomaskantor 300 years ago is a fine opportunity to pay a special tribute to Johann Sebastian Bach this year. I would like to express my sincere thanks to all those who contribute to the festival programme in honour of this brilliant composer here in the musical city of Leipzig. Bach did indeed create something unique in Leipzig. His music touches people all over the world even today.«*

Dr. Skadi Jennicke, Deputy Mayor for Culture of the City of Leipzig: *»In 2023, Leipzig, the city of music, celebrates a significant event in musical history: the 300th anniversary of the inauguration of Johann Sebastian Bach as Thomaskantor. Starting in 1723, as the newly appointed Thomaskantor and the city's director musices, Bach performed new works with the Thomanerchor almost every week. Exactly 300 years later, we will be honouring this national anniversary in Leipzig. To this end, the Leipzig Bach Archive and the Thomanerchor together with the City History Museum and the parishes of St.*

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President Prof. Dr. Ton Koopman · **Director** Prof. Dr. h. c. Peter Wollny · **Acting Managing Director** Ulrich Wingerter

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Thomas and St. Nicholas are planning an impressive, multi-year programme (2023-2027) that is certain to generate international interest.«

The anniversary celebrations in Leipzig kick off on 21 March 2023 – Bach's 338th birthday – with events that include a vernissage in the Leipzig Bach Museum. The anniversary exhibition ***Clear the Stage for Johann Sebastian Bach*** in three acts investigates the mystery and innovative power of Bach's music and explores the influence of Leipzig on Bach's impressive oeuvre. Act 1, **Church Music in Praise of God** (21 March 2023 to 9 July 2023) will be followed by Act 2, **In Search of Perfection** (22 July 2023 to 5 November 2023) and Act 3 **Bach's Music Sets the Tone** (16 November 2023 to 24 March 2024).

The **Leipzig City History Museum** (*Stadtgeschichtliches Museum*) will commemorate the choice of Bach as Thomaskantor by Leipzig's City Council on 22 April 1723 with its specially designed Bach Parcours exhibition, which brings Johann Sebastian Bach's relations with the city council and the context of his work vividly to life in the authentic rooms of the Old Town Hall with sumptuous original exhibits (from 22 April to at least 31 December 2023).

Entitled **BACH for Future**, the **2023 Leipzig Bachfest** will celebrate the composer Johann Sebastian Bach, who still points the way ahead today as he did then. From 8-18 June, the music of the Thomaskantor can be heard in its original venues, performed by renowned artists. More than 150 events are scheduled in more than 30 venues in and around Leipzig. One focus of the festival will be on Bach's first Leipzig annual cycle of cantatas.

During the first weekend of the Bachfest, on the 1st Sunday after Trinity, 11 June 2023, the chronological performance of the Leipzig Bach cantatas on the liturgical dates of their first performances in the Leipzig churches of St. Thomas and St. Nicholas will begin. Up to the Feast of the Trinity 1724, the 300th anniversary of the first performance of each of the 63 cantatas from the first Leipzig annual cycle will be celebrated in the motet concerts in St. Thomas' Church and also every Sunday in the cantata services of both churches – with the regular participation of the **THOMANERCHOR Leipzig** and the Gewandhaus Orchestra. In addition to this, the cantatas for the respective months will be performed in gala concerts featuring international ensembles.

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Bach research in Leipzig will be presented in a comprehensive secondary programme of academic events during the Bachfest. The central event here is a **Musicology Conference** (14-17 June) on the appointment of the new Thomaskantor in 1723 and the history of the Protestant church cantata around 1720, organised jointly by the Leipzig Bach Archive, the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg and the Mainz School of Music.

From 7-16 August, young Bach interpreters from all over the world are expected for **Summer Classes** in Leipzig. These courses for students in their final semesters and young professional musicians are organised by the Leipzig Bach Archive in collaboration with the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra, Vox Luminis and the Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy University of Music and Theatre.

The *Bach300 – 300 Years of Bach in Leipzig* project is funded by the City of Leipzig and the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media. The three-part exhibition series *Clear the Stage for Johann Sebastian Bach* in the Leipzig Bach Museum is funded by Ostdeutsche Sparkassenstiftung together with Sparkasse Leipzig, and the Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States, with additional funding from tax revenues based on the budget decided by the Saxon State Parliament. The main sponsor of the Leipzig Bachfest is Sparkasse Leipzig. The Musicology Conference is sponsored by the Fritz Thyssen Foundation and the regional Baroque music association MBM Mitteldeutsche Barockmusik in Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt und Thüringen e.V..

www.bach300.de

Travel packages for the Leipzig Bachfest by Leipzig Tourismus und Marketing GmbH:

www.leipzig.travel/en/package/bach-festival-opening-leipzig-2023

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