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LEIPZIG RESEARCH TEXT

Leipzig – City of Music (last update: 1 March 2023)

Leipzig's musical roots go back to the early 13th century, when margrave Dietrich appropriated an existing church, which had been built by merchants and craftsmen (predecessor of present St. Thomas Church). He turned it into a donation for the Augustinian canons, who were interested in gaining more power. The school that was part of the church first had the task to teach boys liturgical singing.

St. Thomas Boys Choir

From this the St. Thomas Foundation and the St. Thomas Boys Choir developed. Over the centuries the boys choir was in charge of performing a considerable amount of sacred and secular music in and around Leipzig. In addition to the singing in St. Nicholas and St. Thomas Church, more and more duties for the city filled their daily schedule. Persons of high standing had to be greeted; weddings and funerals of well-to-do citizens had to be given a festive air. The St. Thomas Cantor (music director) was often responsible for music matters in Leipzig in a universal sense. Until the 18th century the boys, mostly children of poor families, still walked through the city and sang in the streets whatever the weather. In the 19th century the motets started to gain more public interest. Since the early 20th century they have taken place regularly every Friday and Saturday, and still every Saturday the Bach cantata is performed in St. Thomas Church. The choir goes on concert tours regularly and carries Bach's music into the world. .

Johann Sebastian Bach

Bach had not been the city council of Leipzig's first choice for the position of St. Thomas Cantor. He only got the job after, at the time far more famous Georg Phillip Telemann and the composer Johann Christoph Graupner had turned it down. From 1723 until his death in 1750 Bach was responsible for the church services and special church festivities at St. Nicholas and St. Thomas. Additionally, as *director musices* of the city, he was in charge of a number of worldly affairs. For several years he was head of the *collegium musicum*, a group of professional and student musicians. He was also asked to examine organs in numerous towns and cities, where he then presented his virtuous abilities. Many important works of the great St.

Thomas Cantor were written in Leipzig: among them several cantata series, St. John and St. Matthew Passion, the Christmas Oratorio, the Art of the Fugue and the Mass in B-Minor. Since the 19th century Leipzig has been the centre of comprehensive efforts to explore and interpret the works of Bach. In this context a number of institutions were founded. Some facts: 1900 founding of the New Bach Society, 1950 founding of the Bach Archives, 1964 start of the biannual International Johann Sebastian Bach Competitions, 1999 start of the Bach Festival Leipzig.

Music Theatre

During the Easter Fair in 1693, the first Leipzig opera house was opened, located on Brühl. The twenty year old Georg Phillip Telemann was responsible for the first big success of the music theatre. The catchy and popular character of his compositions attracted a big audience. In 1868 the New Theatre on Augustusplatz was opened. Works by Carl Maria von Weber ("Freischütz"), Louis Spohr ("Jessonda") and Albert Lortzing ("Zar und Zimmermann") contributed to the development of "grand opera" in Leipzig. Angelo Walther, director of the opera between 1876 and 1882, was a great supporter of Richard Wagner's music. He produced the first complete performance of **Ring of the Nibelungen** after Bayreuth. Between 1923 and 1933 the repertoire was very ambitious, despite restricting conventions. New works resulted in much talked about first nights. The first night of Ernst Krenek's "Jonny spielt auf" (1927) and Kurt Weill's "Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny" (1930) were among the most spectacular events of the century.

Gewandhaus

After 1740 the first concert enterprises came into being. They arranged musical events for experts and friends of classical music against a fee. From this the later Gewandhaus concerts developed. They were named after the hall in the former cloth-makers guild house, which was inaugurated in 1781. This concert venue, the *Gewandhaus*, became a Mecca for famous artists. Works by Robert Schumann, Johannes Brahms, Franz Liszt, Peter Tchaikovsky and numerous others were part of the programme and either enthusiastically welcomed or mercilessly booed at by the well-to-do Leipzig audience.

The Gewandhaus music directors – among them Johann Adam Hiller, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Arthur Nikisch, Wilhelm Furtwängler and Kurt Masur – influenced the repertoire and interpretation profiles. Already in the 19th century the Gewandhausorchester was involved in Leipzig's musical life in three ways: Beside its own concerts it was in charge of the music in the opera and also accompanied the St. Thomas Boys Choir – a peculiarity which has survived until today. As an institution in a comprehensive sense the Gewandhaus is now a place for the arts with concerts, symposia and exhibitions.

Conservatory

Since the beginnings of musical life in Leipzig there has hardly been anything more important than taking care of the new generation of musicians. Pedagogic efforts were connected with St. Thomas School and the work of important composers and virtuosi. Even the city pipers had their trainees. In the 19th century the establishing of an efficient art institute became more and more urgent. It was Mendelssohn, however, who

succeeded in organising an educational institute that met the most modern requirements: On 2nd April, 1843 the **Conservatory of Music** opened its gates with six teachers and 22 alumni. Renowned artists – beside Mendelssohn also Robert Schumann and Moritz Hauptmann – were in charge of teaching. From the beginning a close relationship with the Gewandhausorchester developed. In 1919 an institute for church music was founded at the conservatory, which is now the **College of Music and Drama**. The church music institute was reopened in 1992.

Music publishing houses

Leipzig's reputation as a city of music was to a large degree based on the music publishing houses, many of which used to be in the city. The annual trade fairs had always offered favourable conditions for the trade with musical notations and instruments. The latest compositions were available in Leipzig. This was certainly not the least important reason why music from all over the world went to Leipzig. Renowned composers had their music printed in Leipzig. The tradition of the much sought-after Leipzig musical prints is connected with the development of famous enterprises: foundation of music publishing house (since 1796 Breitkopf & Härtel), 1807 opening of a music shop by Friedrich Hofmeister, which was soon complimented by a publishing house. Complete editions of Bach, Mozart and Mendelssohn as well as numerous first editions came from Leipzig publishing houses. But not only musical notations, also thousands of books on music and renowned magazines such as Robert Schumann's **Neue Zeitschrift für Musik** (New Magazine of Music) originated from Leipzig.

Experience Music History

Leipzig's daily musical life knows many facets. You do not need to go into the Gewandhaus, opera or churches to find traces of musical culture in Leipzig. Everyday live music can be experienced in the streets and squares or city arcades, where street musicians provide spontaneous entertainment. This great variety makes Leipzig a city worth seeing and hearing on 365 days a year.

Each year in June the **Leipzig Bach Festival** is held. During this important international festival renowned musicians from all over the world present a program at authentic Bach sites. The programme includes music from the 17th century until the present day. Traditionally in July the **Gewandhausorchester** closes the season with two spectacular open air concerts in Leipzig's Rosental Park. Locals bring their families, picnic baskets and enjoy world-class music free of charge. In September, the **Con Spirito Chamber Music Festival** brings together renowned stars of the international chamber music scene at authentic music sites in the city to celebrate Leipzig's bourgeois musical culture. The memory of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy is very much alive in Leipzig: Traditionally, the city honours the composer and musician every year with various concerts around 4 November on **Mendelssohn Day**, the anniversary of his death.

Music-related sites in Leipzig

1) St. Nicholas Church: In 1213 the city and parish church St. Nicholas was first mentioned in a document. As the starting point of the Monday Demonstration in the autumn of 1989 the church is one of the city's

best-known buildings. The four-manual concert organ built in 1859 is still one of Germany's biggest. (Nikolaikirchhof 3, 04109 Leipzig, www.nikolaikirche.de)

2) Leipzig Opera: The hour of birth for Leipzig's opera had already come in 1693, which makes it the third-oldest European opera house after Milan and Hamburg. The opera house on Augustusplatz was opened in 1960 with a performance of Wagner's "Meistersinger von Nürnberg". (Augustusplatz 12, 04109 Leipzig, www.oper-leipzig.de/en)

3) Richard Wagner Monument: The column put up in 1983 at the pond next to the opera house carries a bronze cast of the marble bust created by Max Klinger. Wagner is a son of the city. He was born here on 22nd May, 1813. A memorial plaque at the Horten department store reminds of Richard Wagner's house of birth, which had to give way to new buildings in 1886. (www.wagner-verband-leipzig.de)

4) GRASSI Museum of Musical Instruments: The museum owns a comprehensive collection of instruments from European workshops from the Middle Ages up to the present time. The exhibition is housed in the northern wing of the GRASSI Museum and comprises 5,000 pieces. The most important eras of music history and instrument making are presented in 13 extensive chapters. (Johannisplatz 5 – 11, 04103 Leipzig, www.grassimuseum.de/en/)

5) Mendelssohn House: The house in Golschmidtstrasse 12, which has meanwhile been refurbished, was Felix Mendelssohn's Leipzig address. His study and the drawing room, in which beside Wagner also Schumann and Berlioz were guests, have been restored in their original form. The Mendelssohn House is the only house world-wide that commemorates the great composer's and Gewandhaus music director's life and work. The Effektorium, a virtual orchestra that one can conduct and a floor dedicated to Fanny Hensel and Kurt Masur round off the exhibition. (Goldschmidtstrasse 12, 04103 Leipzig, www.mendelssohn-stiftung.de)

6) Robert Schumann Monument: The monument was a donation of a Leipzig music fan and put up sixteen years after Schumann's death. Schumann came to Leipzig as a student in 1828. In the year of his wedding with Clara Wieck he wrote about 150 songs for piano. In 1834 he founded the New Magazine for Music. (Schillerstrasse, behind Moritzbastei students club)

7) Schumann House: The home of Robert and Clara Schumann in Leipzig (1840-1844) is an architectural gem. The young couple moved into the house after their wedding in the church of Schönefeld on 12th September, 1840. (Inselstrasse 18, 04103 Leipzig www.schumannhaus.de/en/)

8) Gewandhaus concert hall: The so-called New Gewandhaus concert hall, which was opened in 1981 thanks to the commitment of Kurt Masur, boasts outstanding acoustics and has gained an excellent reputation world-wide due to the Gewandhausorchester and the Gewandhaus music directors. About 200 musicians contribute to the ensemble's success. The history of the Gewandhausorchester began with the **Grosse Concert**, a group of 16 musicians, founded by Leipzig citizens in 1743. (Augustusplatz 8, 04109 Leipzig, www.gewandhausorchester.de/en/)

9) St. Thomas Church: Built in 1212, St. Thomas Church is a centre of church and music life and has been Bach's working place for many years. The great composer's sarcophagus has been inside the choir of the church since 1950. (Thomaskirchhof 18, 04109 Leipzig, www.thomaskirche.org)

10) Old Bach Monument: The monument, which was a donation of Felix Mendelssohn, was unveiled in 1843. (park at Dittrichring, near St. Thomas Church)

11) New Bach Monument: The second monument to Bach is a 2.45 metres high bronze statue created in 1908. It was drafted by Carl Seffner. (Thomaskirchhof, in front of St. Thomas Church)

12) Bach Archive and Bach Museum: The museum presents the life and works of Johann Sebastian Bach and his family in an interactive multimedia exhibition covering an area of 750 square metres. One of the highlights is the treasure room, where original Bach manuscripts and other precious items are on display. Prize exhibits include the console of an organ inspected and approved by Bach himself in 1743 from the erstwhile St John's Church, a casket containing relics from Bach's tomb, and a recently discovered cash box once owned by the Bach family. (Thomaskirchhof 15/16, 04109 Leipzig www.bach-leipzig.de/en)

Further Information

- www.leipzig.travel/cityofmusic