2006

Theodore Thomas's 1902 Performance of Bach's B-Minor Mass: Working within the Grand American Festival

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THEODORE THOMAS’S 1902 PERFORMANCE OF BACH’S B-MINOR MASS:
WORKING WITHIN THE GRAND AMERICAN FESTIVAL

By

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A thesis submitted to the
College of Music
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Music

Degree Awarded:
Summer Semester 2006

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Douglass Seaton for his tireless support and assistance with this project from its first stages to the final product. Despite an exceptionally busy schedule he always made time for me and for my concerns. I could not have hoped for a better experience throughout this process. My gratitude also goes out to Dr. Charles Brewer for his assistance on the committee and for helping me develop the idea for this thesis in his course Music in the United States. Dr. Alex Jiménez offered invaluable insights through his perspective as an orchestral conductor.

My thanks go out to Katie McMahon at The Newberry Library in Chicago and Anne Shepherd at The Cincinnati Historical Society Library for providing access to the primary resources used in this research.

The importance of good friends to discuss ideas and provide much needed support (and coffee) after particularly tough meetings cannot be overvalued. Although numerous student colleagues provided support throughout this thesis, three deserve specific mention. Thank you Jessica Bryant, Lyndsey Thornton, and Janine Tiffe for everything.

My parents, brother, and sister have always supported me in all my endeavors and were no different with my thesis. Even though I never visit home as much as I should, I always knew that I was in their thoughts.

There are many graduate students who seem able to weather the academic demands of projects such as this without any difficulty. Unfortunately, I am not one of those students. Thankfully, I am surrounded by an incredible network of faculty, family, and friends without whom I would not have been able to accomplish this undertaking.
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ABSTRACT

Over the course of his career Theodore Thomas became one of the most influential figures in the development of nineteenth-century American musical culture. He is best known today for his role in the foundation of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, but this was only a small part of his role in the musical development of the United States. Also important was Thomas’s involvement with the Cincinnati Musical Festival, a biennial event considered in the conductor’s lifetime to be one of his greatest achievements. This concert series is a paradigmatic example of the grand American festival, a popular nineteenth-century performance tradition.

While working within this performance tradition, Thomas had to make careful decisions between his own musical values and the expectations of the American public. Because concerts were primarily dependent upon ticket revenue, American performances were unusually responsive to the audience’s whims. Theodore Thomas’s experiences growing up in America as a young entrepreneurial performer made him particularly aware of the pragmatic side of his art, an awareness that he applied to his experiences in Cincinnati.

In Cincinnati countless influences shaped the festival. These influences included the predominance of German culture in the area and the city’s highly developed singing tradition, but most significant was the Cincinnati Music Hall, built in 1878. This massive hall was the musical pride of the city, and Thomas was keenly aware of its important role in maintaining support from the city and financial success at the festival. For this reason, the conductor adapted works to suit the dimensions of this hall and the large chorus that performed there.

The work that required the most adaptation was Bach’s B-minor Mass, performed in its entirety at the 1902 and 1904 festivals. This Mass held a place of special significance for Thomas, but it required more adaptation than any other work performed during his involvement with the festival. Fortunately, the score from his 1902 performance has been preserved and is currently in the Midwest archives of the Newberry Library in Chicago. Examination of this score reveals that Thomas made extensive changes and additions to the work’s orchestration, instrumentation, and ornamentation to adapt it to Cincinnati’s hall and to his modern orchestra.
Despite these changes, Thomas believed that he maintained the spirit of the composer and presented the work in a respectful manner.

Throughout his career Thomas developed firm views about his own musical ideal, but he also understood the significance of the American public in furthering his art. His 1902 performance of Bach’s Mass in B minor demonstrates the conductor’s ability to balance his own musical priorities with those of the American public. Out of this compromise came a new performance tradition that responded to the American aesthetic in a way that only an American could.
CHAPTER 1
UNDERSTANDING THEODORE THOMAS

On the morning of 6 January 1905, at St. James Episcopalian Church in Chicago, a small group of family and friends gathered to pay their respects to Theodore Thomas. The scale of the ceremony did not reflect Thomas’s stature within his profession; the conductor had become one of the most famous and influential figures in nineteenth-century American musical life. The ceremony’s modesty hardly seems to have been adequate to mark the passing of an individual who held such sway over Chicago’s public that on the day of his death telephone operators announced to callers, “Thomas is dead,” before inquiring for the connecting number.1 Instead, the event reflected his reserved personality as an individual who always attempted to avoid attention towards his personal affairs. The service was simple and intimate, with no eulogies and only an organ and a small wind choir from his orchestra playing the music of Beethoven and Bach.2

Despite this reserved personality, by the time of his death musicians from Europe and America knew Thomas as one of the leading conductors of American orchestras. Among the condolences sent from everywhere in Europe and America were letters from Felix Weingartner, Arthur Nikisch, William Mason, and Richard Strauss. Strauss best summarized the realm of Thomas’s influence in his condolences when he wrote, “What Thomas signified for musical development in America is universally known. What we Germans owe him shall be held in everlasting remembrance.”3


The Early Years

Thomas’s success in American musical culture, however, could never have been foreseen from his inauspicious beginnings. He was the son of an immigrant family and spent most of his childhood working to support the family rather than receiving any form of academic tutelage. After gaining only the equivalent of a fourth-grade education, Thomas learned exclusively from life experience and personal study. Unexpectedly, his life choices seem to have perfectly prepared him for his later professional aspirations.

Theodore Thomas’s formal education in music ended before he emigrated from Germany in 1845 at the age of 10. Upon arriving in America, he immediately began assisting with family finances and from this point forward only studied music in professional settings. Despite Thomas’s talent with the violin, performance opportunities in New York were scarce. In his autobiography Thomas explained, “the only resource open to an instrumentalist was to join a brass band and play for parades or dancing.”

Thomas managed a meager income from the few English theaters in the city before traveling with his father, also a musician, to Norfolk, Virginia, in search of more lucrative performance opportunities. After a brief period with a Navy ensemble onboard the man-of-war Pennsylvania, Thomas and his father parted company, as his father returned to New York and Thomas began to tour the southern states with his violin.

This tour provided crucial learning experiences and proved vital to Thomas in his formative years. Working with a meager budget, the young musician traveled with only his fiddle, some posters announcing him as “Master T. T.,” and a box of clothing. After arriving in each town, he would gain permission from the hotel to perform that evening in their dining hall, then go around town posting his concert announcements. Thomas singlehandedly ran the entire endeavor, securing performance halls, taking the entrance money, and of course performing the concert. The most important lessons he learned from this lifestyle dealt with the entrepreneurial

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4Ibid., 20.

side of his art. By the age of fifteen Thomas had gained a firm understanding of the practical necessities for successful public musical performances. He was well aware of the immediate dependence in America of the performer on the audience’s financial support, an awareness he applied to his later chamber concerts and orchestral pursuits.

In 1850, following this short period in the South, Thomas traveled back to New York with the intention of returning to Europe to pursue more serious study of his art. New York, however, was not the same as when he had left. The performance opportunities within the cultivated instrumental tradition were greatly improved. Soon Thomas began a series of solo performances in the city. This time he found support from individuals who recognized Thomas’s talent and helped him get involved in the city’s burgeoning musical culture. Thomas’s first ensemble employment was with German theater orchestras, exposing him to the literary works of Goethe and Schiller. As well, nearly every visiting virtuoso stopped first in New York on American tours. Thomas learned much of his later understanding of contemporary European performance practice from careful observation of individuals such as Jenny Lind, Henriette Sontag, and Adelina Patti.

In 1854 Thomas was elected to the Philharmonic Society, the premiere (and only full-sized) orchestral organization in New York. Unfortunately, this ensemble, then in its twelfth year, failed to reach a stature equivalent to the size of its respective city. The ensemble performed only four concerts a year and, though consisting of the best performers in the city, had never become the most important performance obligation of its players. The musicians would often miss rehearsals and concerts for more lucrative performance opportunities elsewhere. Rather than focusing his efforts on the Philharmonic Society, Thomas pursued different musical

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6The definition of the cultivated musical tradition in nineteenth-century America can be vague and misleading. For the purposes of this study the term will refer to Wiley Hitchcock’s definition. The cultivated tradition in this context comprises the genres of sacred music, piano music, orchestral music, and opera, which developed greater autonomy from the vernacular tradition beginning in 1820. Wiley H. Hitchcock, Music in the United States: A Historical Introduction (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2000) 66.

7Theodore Thomas, 1: 24-25.

8Schabas, 10-11.
outlets. Shortly after joining the Philharmonic Society, he met William Mason and accepted an invitation to perform chamber works with the already established musician.\(^9\) Mason then proceeded to recruit three other musicians from the New York area, all with more professional experience and prominence than Thomas. The ensemble consisted of Thomas playing the first violin part, Joseph Mosenthal playing second violin, George Matzka playing viola, Carl Bergmann playing cello, and William Mason playing the piano.\(^10\) Not only were all of the other musicians older than he was, they had also been educated in Europe. Despite Thomas’s concerns over his inadequate musical education, his natural talent proved enough for the group to accept him eagerly and eventually to consider him their leader. The ensemble called its 1855 concert series the Mason and Bergmann concerts, later dubbed the Mason-Thomas concerts when the group resumed in 1857.

At this young age Thomas’s natural dominance and leadership were already apparent. His influence became most apparent in the group’s distinctive programming, one of its most acclaimed traits. The programs were carefully balanced, containing a few easily accessible compositions as well as more substantial and musically significant works.\(^11\) The Mason-Thomas concerts introduced Thomas to New York and provided the young violinist with the closest possible equivalent to a European musical education.\(^12\) Over the course of his fourteen years performing with this quartet he developed into a leading American violinist, served as

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\(^9\)William Mason was a talented pianist and the son of Lowell Mason, the important music educator. Ibid., 11.

\(^10\) The other members of the group all had strong ties to European education and performance. Notably, Joseph Mosenthal had studied with Spohr at Cassel, and Carl Bergmann, perhaps the most established member of the group, conducted the Germania Society in America before its disbanding in 1854. He then served as the co-conductor of the Philharmonic Society. Ibid.

\(^11\) Thomas’s programming became a trademark of his entire career. Through careful programming choices Thomas attracted new individuals to his concerts and consistently challenged the accepted standards of the repertoire.

\(^12\) Although Thomas never studied Europe, he received some harmony lessons in the early 1850s from Rudolph Schillinger and studied counterpoint and fugue with William Meyerhofer, an accomplished organist. Theodore Thomas, 2: 45.
concertmaster for many of New York’s ensembles, and made his transition into the role of orchestral conducting.

The Thomas Orchestra

Although unaware of its consequences at the time, Thomas made a decision that became the basis for his life’s work. As explained in his autobiography, “In 1862 I concluded to devote my energies to the cultivation of the public taste for instrumental music. Our chamber concerts had created a spasmodic interest, our programmes were reprinted as models of their kind, even in Europe, and our performances had reached a high standard. . . . But what this country needed most of all to make it musical was a good orchestra, and plenty of concerts within reach of the people. . . . I therefore called a meeting of the foremost orchestra musicians of New York, told them of my plans to popularize instrumental music, and asked their coöperation.” In 1864 Theodore Thomas announced a five-concert series of “Symphony Soirées” over the period of five months, performed under his direction at Irving Hall. By the end of the first season the ensemble had become known as the Theodore Thomas Orchestra and had established itself in the musical culture of the city.

Although the early performances by this ensemble would not achieve Thomas’s later standard, the orchestra had immediate advantages over the Philharmonic Society. The most significant among these advantages was that Thomas’s orchestra committed itself to him for the full tenure of its engagement. While the Philharmonic Society still paid its musicians for each individual performance, Thomas had created a full-time ensemble whose musicians regarded these rehearsal and performance obligations as their primary responsibility. Although the ensemble had not yet become the fine tuned machine for which audiences later knew it, the press

13Theodore Thomas, 1: 50-51.

14Irving Hall was not an ideal venue for Thomas’s performance, but decently suited the orchestra. The four-year old hall, located on just off Union Square, had been slightly rundown, but benefitted from renovations before Thomas’s concerts.
generously applauded Thomas’s efforts.

Finding consistent paying performance opportunities remained the most daunting challenge of employing a full-time orchestra. Even with a supportive audience turnout at his soirées, Thomas hardly ever turned a profit, so he had to find additional performance venues. When Steinway Hall was built in 1866, the Thomas Orchestra had for the first time its own hall (2,100 seats) in which to perform. It performed the gala concert celebrating the hall’s opening on 30 October 1866.15 In addition to Thomas’s obligations with his orchestra, his increasing prominence assisted him in gaining posts such as the directorship of the Brooklyn Philharmonic Society. Although this kept Thomas busy, his orchestra still needed more performances. These opportunities came with the opening of a small auditorium in Central Park in 1868 that provided for informal concerts. This auditorium was part of an open-air beer garden and restaurant that promoted an evening of casual entertainment, an atmosphere that Thomas encouraged through his programming choices. This concert series exemplifies the busy performance schedule that the ensemble needed to maintain profitability. During the course of the eight four-month seasons that the Thomas Orchestra performed the Central Park Garden series, it gave a total of 1,127 concerts. This ratio works out to well over one performance a day for the entire course of the concert series.16

The eventual solution to the problem of profitability became Thomas’s primary source of income until the last few weeks of his life. Having saturated the public interest for music in New York, Thomas looked elsewhere for concert opportunities. Thus, the first tour of the Thomas Orchestra began on 6 October 1869. Traveling along the railroad system, the ensemble stopped in every city large enough to sustain a proper concert. This grueling schedule often resulted in daily concerts with very few opportunities to rest. Although later tours traveled as far west as the Pacific coast or through the Southern states, the first tour of the Thomas Orchestra was smaller.

15Schabas, 31-32.

16Ibid., 38.
Rose Thomas, Theodore Thomas’s second wife, provided the itinerary of the first tour in her memoirs (see Table 1.1).\textsuperscript{17}

Table 1.1. The performance locations on the first Thomas Orchestra tour\textsuperscript{18}

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\textsuperscript{17}After the death of Minna Thomas in 1889, Theodore married Rose Fay 1890.

The Orchestra traveled for seven to eight months each tour and performed varied programming suited to the musical refinement of each city. If Thomas performed lighter works at a city’s initial performance, he would increase the sophistication of the programming on subsequent visits. These yearly tours introduced Theodore Thomas to the rest of America. Although he had already become a leading musical figure in the socially cultivated cities of the New England area, his tours established Thomas as the ambassador of instrumental music to America. Through these tours he met wealthy individuals from various places in the country, many of whom would support his later ambitions.

The first of these ambitions was the formation of the inaugural Cincinnati Musical Festival in 1873. Although this event receives little discussion in current Theodore Thomas research, the festival was considered in his lifetime to be one of his greatest achievements. Rose Thomas emphasized the significance of this festival in her memoirs, writing, “The first Cincinnati festival followed a few days after the New York festival was over, and marked the beginning of one of the most important labors of Thomas’s life—important not only to himself, but to the musical history of America.”\(^{19}\) The importance of this festival will receive more attention in the next chapter.

Endeavors such as these were not uncommon for Thomas. He often sought out such engagements for his orchestra, undoubtedly due in part to the financial security of most festivals. Thomas, however, also pursued many other performance ventures that provided less financial security than the festivals and often fared poorly. Most notable among these were the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, the American Opera Company, and the World’s Columbian Exposition.

The first of these setbacks, the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876, seemed in its planning to be a very secure business venture. The proportions of the festival were particularly large, and Thomas anticipated that audiences from all over the country would attend the festivities. In addition to the planned concerts, Thomas convinced the financial organization backing the exposition, the Women’s Centennial Executive Committee, to commission a march

\(^{19}\)Ibid., 88.
from Richard Wagner. This plan proved disastrous for Thomas in the end. Wagner requested the exorbitant amount of $5000 for the commission.20 The committee accepted this incredible sum because it planned to defer the costs by selling a piano arrangement of the march after the festival. However, Wagner broke his contract by allowing his publisher, Bernhard Schott, to prepare a piano version of the piece and send it to America. In addition, Thomas found out when the march arrived that the renowned composer had written a work of extremely poor quality.21

The crushing blow to Thomas’s economic situation came when the concert series began and attendance was drastically below the expected amount. The Women’s Centennial Music Hall, where Thomas’s orchestra performed, was well outside the center of town and could not draw an audience after a long day of visiting exhibits. The problem became exacerbated when Jacques Offenbach arrived in downtown Philadelphia and began a series of concerts and operettas.22

After the centennial Thomas found himself in such a desperate financial situation that the Philadelphia sheriff seized all of his possessions for auction. If it had not been for Dr. Franz Zinzer, a close friend from New York, all of Thomas’s processions (including his vast music library) would have been sold. Zinzer bought Thomas’s possessions and rented them to the conductor for an extremely modest fee, but still Thomas remained in constant debt for another twelve years.23

After the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, Theodore Thomas tried to improve his financial situation by means of multiple tours, festivals, and a brief stint as the founding director

21Schabas, 72.
22Ibid., 73-77.
23After renting Thomas his music and instruments for a couple of years, Dr. Zinzer gave everything to Minna, Theodore Thomas’s first wife. He jokingly instructed her, “If you lend him one of the works, tell him to take good care of it.” Rose Thomas, 120.
of the Cincinnati College of Music. His financial concerns returned in full force as the result of his joining the American Opera Company. The opera company seemed initially to be a promising prospect and a fairly safe financial investment. Jeannette Thurber, a wealthy woman from New York who famously later founded the National Conservatory of Music in America and brought Antonín Dvořák to the United States, conceived the idea for the opera company. She seemed to possess enough social influence to elicit support from various individuals across the Northeast. The primary objective, as explained in the company’s prospectus, was to perform “Grand opera sung in our own language” by American performers. The enterprise had many financial backers, which increased Thomas’s confidence. Additionally, he bore no financial obligation to the company. Thurber also enticed Thomas with a generous salary of $28,000, an amount that would greatly reduce the conductor’s debt. Despite a successful inaugural tour and a great deal of initial support, the opera company’s faced dire straits financially by its second season. The company owed Thomas between five and six months of salary, which he never received. As well, Thomas paid his orchestra out of his own pocket for the last part of the tour, because the company would not. Compounding Thomas’s already excessive financial troubles, creditors seeking money from the American Opera Company attempted to hold Thomas responsible when no other parties would pay the company’s substantial debts. Although Thomas’s lawyer managed to avoid this liability, he did not manage to retrieve any of the salary owed to Thomas or the orchestra.

Despite the financial troubles that plagued Thomas and his ensembles throughout the majority of his life, America still considered him the country’s premier conductor. He never lacked performance opportunities. Instead, the challenge was finding a way to make these opportunities profitable. Although touring with his ensemble paid well enough in ideal

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24At its inception in 1878, the Cincinnati Conservatory was called the Cincinnati College of Music. Theodore Thomas’s brief role as director of the institution will be discussed in the second chapter.

25It was not uncommon for Thomas to ensure with his own money that his performers were paid, even when he was not the responsible party. He considered his performers to be his troops and showed them a great deal of loyalty, expecting the same in return.
circumstances, unforeseen variables often made travel costly. In addition, this strenuous schedule took its toll on the ensemble and its conductor. Thomas complained many times in letters that he was getting too old for the strain. The other source of income was festivals. While festivals proved consistently profitable for Thomas, they alone could not permanently sustain the orchestra.

For these reasons Thomas spent over thirty years of his conducting career searching for a permanent home for his orchestra. Although he worked on this objective for decades with New York, Chicago eventually fulfilled this goal, when Orchestra Hall became the permanent home for the Thomas Orchestra on December 14, 1904. It had taken an unprecedented showing of support from the entire city to bring the conductor’s dream to fruition. By the end of the 1901-02 season the orchestra’s deficit had risen to $30,000. This was not uncommon for the organization, as it had incurred a steadily growing deficit every season. However, the deficit had begun to seem so insurmountable and touring so fatiguing that Thomas regretfully placed an ultimatum before the Board of Directors. This ultimatum warned that the ensemble would have to disband, if the board could not provide a permanent and satisfactory performance venue. For this reason, the Board of Directors began one of the most ambitious fund-raising campaigns in the country’s history. Initially, the Board attempted to convince seventy-five wealthy subscribers each to donate $10,000. This approach seemed plausible, because artistic organizations in America had historically relied upon the deep pockets of a few wealthy individuals as the only form of public support outside of ticket sales. This, however, proved ineffective. Instead, the press assisted in sending a request to the entire city for donations totaling $750,000; this amount would be enough to build a performance hall suitable for the city’s orchestra. The response was without

26 In addition to the typical delays of railroad travel such as inclement weather, Thomas faced far more debilitating obstacles. The most notable among these was the great Chicago fire which destroyed the Crosby Opera House on the night of its grand opening after renovation. The Thomas Orchestra had scheduled a performance there, but instead had much its music destroyed and found itself stranded in Joliet without work for over a week. This situation was another time when Thomas paid his orchestra out of his own pocket for the duration of the downtime.

27 The Boston Symphony Orchestra built Symphony Hall shortly before Orchestra Hall and cost the same amount.
precedent. By the time that the target amount had been reached, eight thousand citizens of Chicago had contributed to the cause. Rose Thomas pointed out in her memoirs that those donating included janitors and scrubwomen, as well as the wealthy and cultivated.

**Redefining Thomas**

Most contemporary Thomas research has focused upon Thomas’s career-long goal of finding a permanent institution for his orchestra, as well as the impact of his years of touring upon American musical culture. A prominent example of this is Ezra Schabas’s biographic portrayal of Thomas as a musical missionary, spreading instrumental music throughout the United States. This perspective is emphasized by chapter headings such as “Spreading the Gospel” and “A Chastened Prophet.” Despite the attraction of viewing Thomas in this light, examination of Thomas’s life suggests parallels with a different profession. Theodore Thomas acted as a salesman of the orchestra to America. He believed in the merit of his product, and although he hardly ever turned a profit, he remained confident in his approach. As well, he remained confident that the American public would eventually embrace his music, but he knew also that it needed to be presented in a way that could be appreciated. Thomas expressed this belief in his autobiography, stating, “I have an undying faith in the latent musical appreciation of the American public.”

Throughout the course of Thomas’s career, he relied on the American public’s ticket purchases. Even as a teenager touring through the south, Thomas knew that programming was vital to an audience’s reception. This intimate understanding informed Thomas’s programming method his entire life. When he worked on his autobiography with George Upton, Thomas only stipulated that the programs from all of his concerts be included in

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28 Theodore Thomas, 1: 127.
the biography. To this end, Upton devoted the entire second volume of the first printing of Thomas’s autobiography to listing the contents of Thomas’s programs.\(^{29}\)

Through a combination of life experience and an instinct for effective performance planning, Thomas developed rigid musical ideals. Although he occasionally made concessions for specific circumstances, his ideals never wavered. Most significant among these was his belief in the value of instrumental music. The opening statement of Thomas’s autobiography espouses this ideal.

A symphony orchestra shows the culture of a community, not opera. The man who does not know Shakespeare is to be pitied; and the man who does not understand Beethoven and has not been under his spell has not half lived his life. The master works of instrumental music are the language of the soul and express more than those of any other art. Light music, ‘popular’ so called, is the sensual side of the art and has more or less devil in it.\(^{30}\)

The statement obviously represents Thomas’s commitment to the masterworks of instrumental music, but it also reveals more specific priorities. Based upon Thomas’s programming choices, his reference to the “masterworks” of instrumental music meant predominantly Austrian and German compositions. In 1877, while Thomas was conductor of the New York Philharmonic Society, 82 percent of his performances were of works by Austrian or German composers.\(^{31}\) Although his interests broadened slightly as his career progressed, Austrian and German music remained the dominant repertoire in his programming. Over the course of Thomas’s fourteen seasons with the Chicago Orchestra he conducted Austrian or German works 64 percent of the time.\(^{32}\) It would be misleading to imply that Thomas’s basis for programming choices was solely contingent on the composer’s nationality. In fact, the statistics are slightly skewed by the predominance of a couple of composers, namely Beethoven and

\(^{29}\)Although this was apparently a principal concern to Thomas, the publishers and reading public were apparently not so interested in this data. When they reprinted the biography in 1964, they omitted the programs.

\(^{30}\)Thomas, 1: inside cover.

\(^{31}\)Schabas, 232.

\(^{32}\)Ibid.
Wagner, whom Thomas believed to be the cornerstones of cultivated musical culture. Beethoven represented the greatest achievements of past instrumental music, and Wagner revealed the future of musical development, a future which Thomas embraced eagerly and quickly.\textsuperscript{33} Through Thomas’s years with the Chicago Orchestra 40 percent of his programs contained compositions by Beethoven and 60 percent contained Wagner’s works. In addition, Thomas scheduled four solely Beethoven and Wagner concerts, five all-Wagner concerts, and twelve all-Beethoven concerts.\textsuperscript{34} This programming style was not unique to Chicago. Decades earlier, Thomas had performed in every city of the orchestra’s 1870 tour an all-Beethoven program for the composer’s centennial celebration.\textsuperscript{35}

Thomas also claimed to support American composers (and American musical culture in general), though different sources suggest conflicting results. There is little doubt, however, of his patriotic sentiment. George Upton characterized the conductor’s national pride in his reminiscences: “Many a time have I heard him resent foreign slurs upon American institutions and defend the national government’s policy against its critics. His love for the United States, where he had lived from boyhood, and his respect and admiration for the broad-minded views of its people as well as their public spirit, was deep, sincere, and hearty.”\textsuperscript{36} In comparison with this seeming pride in the achievements of American composers, his actual support seems to have been more limited. Even in Thomas’s later years as conductor of the Chicago Orchestra, when

\textsuperscript{33} On September 17, 1872 Thomas conducted his first exclusively Wagnerian program. In recognition of the concert a banquet was presented to the orchestra by Wagner’s American supporters, and that night they formed the Wagner Verein, with Thomas as the president. Russell, 85.


\textsuperscript{35} Thomas, 1: 57.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 254.
Upton claims that Thomas “gave much attention to the works of American composers,”37 Ezra Schabas identifies only three percent of the works that he performed as by Americans. This is well behind the twelve percent devoted to Russian works, eleven percent by French composers, and even the meager four percent by Czech composers.38

Although three percent seems to be an inconsequential amount of support for the cause of American composers, it must be seen within historical context. As a salesman of orchestral music, Thomas remained constrained by the demands of the public. When he scheduled a concert of all American composers in his first season with the Chicago Orchestra, it was the least attended event. The paltry proceeds of $598 could not justify such programming in contrast to other concerts of the same season that earned up to $4,373.75, such as the one featuring the pianist Ignaz Paderewski.39

Regardless of such circumstances, even early in his career Thomas professed and demonstrated concern for American composers. The announcement of Thomas’s second season of Central Park Garden Concerts read, “It will further be augmented, from time to time, by the introduction of the latest European and American successes.”40 As well, Thomas made a controversial move in 1867 by nominating for president of the New York Philharmonic the American composer and member violinist George Bristow. Thomas reasoned that electing Bristow as president might help change the society’s attitude toward American music. Bristow lost the election decisively to R.O. Doremus.41 Efforts such as these elicited remarks from periodicals such as the The Nation in New York, which pointed out in its memorial to Thomas, “he did more for American composers than any other conductor has done.”42

37 Ibid., 229.
38 Schabas, 232.
39 Thomas, 1964, A32.
40 Thomas, 1: 132.
41 Schabas, 33.
42 Thomas, 1: 295.
Ideological European Ties

Although Thomas supported some American compositions and musicians, the manner in which he chose what and whom to support was inextricably bound to European standards. The compositions he introduced and championed as a step forward in American culture were validated by European compositional practices. The performances by American musicians were compared to the same performance standards of Europe; standards that Thomas applied equally to himself. He first, however, needed to be fully versed in the European musical standards. Even though he received a “vicarious” European education beginning in 1855 with the Mason-Thomas chamber concerts, his insecurities regarding proper musical practice remained for years.

In 1867, just five years after embarking on his conducting career, Thomas decided to visit Europe. On this trip he traveled through England, France, Germany, Austria. He intended this journey to enable him to compare his knowledge of performance to that of musicians from the musical capitals of the world. He kept a brief journal of this trip and in it expressed great surprise at what he found. He considered many of the leading conductors to be fundamentally lacking and arrived at the same conclusions about their ensembles. Among those conductors discussed in his journal Thomas described John Ella (1802-1888) as a monkey, Luigi Arditi (1822-1903) and Henry Wylde (1822-1890) were simply “bad,” Jean Joseph Bott (1826-1895) was musically condemned as “a man of no talent, and no conductor,” and Wilhelm Taubert (1811-1891) perhaps escaped with the lightest criticism being “an old machine, but no precision.” The ensembles of Josef Gung’l (1809-1889) and Rudolf Radecke (1829-1893) were
equally criticized as meriting no comparison with Thomas’s orchestra and being very “scholastic,” respectively.43

The only interactions that seem to have warranted Thomas’s respect and admiration were with Julius Rietz (1812-1877) and Hector Berlioz (1803-1869). Thomas remarked about Rietz, “I have found in him the first composer who really knows something.”44 Berlioz received Thomas cordially and, having heard that Thomas performed his works in America, gave the conductor a copy of the score to his Grande Messe des Morts.45 The most lasting effect of Thomas’s European trip was confidence in his conducting, violin playing, and general musical

43These assessments do not represent the totality of the journal. Although Rose Thomas reproduced most of the journal in her memoirs, portions of it are not included. She did not provide any rationale for the exclusionary process.

Thomas did not always specify in his journal the ensemble for each performance. In 1867, during the time of John Ella’s London performance, Ella did not direct any orchestra full-time. Luigi Arditi conducted Titians at Her Majesty’s Theater. Henry Wylde conducted the London Philharmonic. Jean Joseph Bott led an orchestra in Hanover. Wilhelm Taubert’s performance was probably with the Berlin Royal Opera. Joseph Gung’l, who led the Berlin Strauss Orchestra through an American tour in 1848-1849, led an orchestra in Munich in 1867. Julius Rietz was the musical director of the city of Dresden during Thomas’s European vacation. Thomas observed Radecke conducting the Royal Opera through a performance of Prophète. The conductor also led the Royal Orchestra, which performed with the opera company. Information for every individual included in this footnote, except Rudolf Radecke, was obtained from the second edition of The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians; Richard Schaal, “Radecke, Rudolf,” in Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 1st ed., edited by Friedrich Blume (New York: Bärenreiter Kassel, 1962), 10: 1850-51.

44While in Germany Thomas heard Rietz’s Dresden orchestra perform a Bach Suite. Thomas commented that it was well played but gave no additional commentary.

Among Rietz’s duties as a conductor, he also acted as the secretary of the Bach-Gesellschaft from 1855-60. During that time he edited the initial 1856 and subsequent 1857 versions of Bach’s B-Minor Mass. This edition remained the primary source for most performances of the work throughout the nineteenth century. Thomas’s 1902 performance, however, used a more recent edition from 1899, by Hermann Kretschmar. This will receive more discussion in Chapter 4. John Butt, Bach: Mass in B Minor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 31.

45Thomas finally received an opportunity to perform Berlioz’s Requiem at the 1902 Cincinnati Musical Festival. Rose Thomas, 36-38.
conception. This seemed to have convinced him that he was on the correct path, because he left for his first tour along the “Thomas Highway” two years later.

Thomas took a second trip to Europe in 1880, although this time he did not look for validation of his art. He kept a similar journal of his experiences and managed to meet with more influential European composers and conductors than on the previous trip. This time he was offered the directorship of the London Philharmonic, an offer that confirmed the level of his achievements as more than just being the best conductor of a musically mediocre country. He had now achieved prominence in Europe, as well. Although Thomas stood resolute in his decision not to go to London, he wrote to Lawrence Maxwell, one of the founding members and later president of the Cincinnati May Festival, “I do not want to leave America – at the same time, if you could see how grateful the British people are for good music, and how enthusiastic, you would certainly think it worth my consideration.” Upon his return the now famous conductor commented to a reporter who asked for comparisons of America to London, “I was amazed to find, after my long absence from Europe that now we are really a long way ahead of London in the matter of critical judgement as well as in performance. Our programmes are better, our musicians play better, and our people – I speak of New York and Boston especially – listen more intelligently.”46

Personal Beliefs

Although Thomas did not hesitate to discuss trivial issues with reporters, his demeanor changed entirely when the subject material involved his personal life, musical ideals, or controversial matters. This behavior was likely due in part to how personally the conductor internalized performance reviews. Additionally, he became outraged at being misrepresented and would refuse to associate with reporters who perpetrated this unforgivable offence. Fortunately for those wishing to know Thomas’s musical ideals better, he wrote a number of articles for various publications towards the latter portion of his life. Most notable among these was an

46Ibid., 187-90.
essay written by Thomas for *Scribner’s Monthly* in 1881. In this article Thomas clearly and concisely described his musical ideals and his beliefs about the direction of music in America. Among his opening statements Thomas wrote, “The incessant pressures of work which every American feels, prevents the men from paying much attention to music, but as the country advances in age and begins to acquire some of the repose which age brings, there will come possibilities of development which cannot now be estimated.” It has been established that Thomas thoroughly contemplated the challenges of bringing the American public into the concert halls, an issue already addressed in discussion of other aspects of Thomas’s life. As this article continues with his beliefs about the state of American music, however, the assertions become more surprising. Vocal music is treated first in this article, a decision that he justified by the progress of vocal over instrumental music making. Thomas admitted that many reach a different conclusion, but he contended, “We have no public instrumental performers of American birth who can rank with our singers in public estimation, nor is there at present more than a very limited demand for instrumentalists.” This statement surprises the reader because research on Thomas has focused almost solely upon Thomas’s orchestral career.

Later in the article Thomas addressed the state of entertainment in America. After emphasizing again the difficulty presented by the demands of the time upon the working man, Thomas explained, “. . . he [the average American] looks for relaxation in some kind of amusement which makes little or no demand upon his intellect, and he has no difficulty in finding it.” The musical centers of American culture were divided between two groups, those who attended the theaters and those for whom the church was the social center. The state of music in the church received Thomas’s attention first and was of paramount concern. Because of

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48 Ibid., 777.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid., 778.
the implications that it holds for Thomas’s relationship with Bach’s B-Minor Mass, this entire portion of the article merits quotation:

In both church and theater, the standard of music is a low one. In the church, where first of all sincerity should prevail, and where nothing but healthy food should be given, the music is looked upon as an attraction and given as an amusement. It is largely operatic, it appeals to the senses only, and is too often of the sickly sentimental order. In those churches only which have congregational singing is the sense of what is suitable and decorous not offended. In this criticism I do not include some of the Roman Catholic churches. The priest estimates at its full value the power of music over the masses, and coöperates with the organist to produce a good musical service. Why cannot this be done in the protestant churches? Pleasing music need not be trifling or sentimental; there are many beautiful works, not suited for the concert-room, which are intended for devotional use. But the greater part of the church music is a sort of patchwork—a little piece from this composer and another piece from that, put together by an amateur. A higher aim ought to be set, if not in the first place because of the art itself (though, why this is not a praiseworthy purpose I do not see), at least for the sake of truth and propriety. The most exalted and artistic church service is the most proper one. The music that will inspire those feelings which ought to fill the soul of every worshiper is noble, good music—not sentimental, not secular, but lofty and devotional.51

Theodore Thomas’s beliefs about appropriate music for worship had nothing to do with the language of the text, the ideals espoused in the music, or denominational associations. Instead, he valued an authentic spiritual performance, where the music was performed for the worship of God rather than the self-aggrandizement of the performer. Of course, Thomas chose the music capable of this lofty and devotional aim as dictated by the same standards as his preferences in secular music.

The last sentence of this excerpt seems to imply that music’s sole aim in this venue should be to enhance meaningful and proper worship. At an earlier point in the article, however, Thomas implied another value, stating, “A higher aim ought to be set, if not in the first place because of the art itself…” Here it becomes apparent how much veneration he placed upon worthy art regardless of its spiritual purpose. Great musical literature demands a performance befitting its prestigious societal role and is nearly equated in this article to religious worship.

51Ibid.
The musical ideals espoused by Thomas and relayed by his first biographers were not always evident in his actions as a conductor. Thomas’s views concerning authenticity in performance were discussed by Rose Thomas in her memoirs. She explained that Thomas used to adapt orchestral works in any way possible, in order to make the piece more alluring to American audiences. Thomas reconsidered this approach later in life, concluding that the musician’s duty is to interpret the music exactly as the composer intended. Although Rose states that Thomas then went through all his scores, removing any additions, and resolved to adapt his orchestra to compositions instead of compositions to his orchestra, his actions call the accuracy of this statement into question. Oddly, Rose Thomas followed that statement with a thorough discussion of Thomas’s 1902 Cincinnati Musical Festival performance of Bach’s B-Minor Mass, a performance for which Thomas spent two years of score study in preparation. The deep investment in this work resulted from his respect for the significance of the Mass to the Western canon. Rose Thomas’s remarks notwithstanding, the 1902 performance score is laden with multiple alterations and departures from the composer’s original conception. This topic will receive more consideration later in this thesis.

Although Thomas was supremely aware of the importance of his audiences’ musical preferences he did not always neglect the implications of his musical studies in performances. Perhaps the most revealing example of this was his request during the building of Orchestra Hall that there be a separate, smaller hall for chamber performances of Classic-period works with an appropriate size orchestra.52 He complained that American halls better suited for mass meetings and horse shows forced him to use disproportionately large ensembles.53

Thorough appreciation of Thomas’s upbringing and life experience is vital for developing a clear understanding of his treatment of the music of J. S. Bach at the Cincinnati Musical Festival. His decisions regarding programming, performance, venue, and many other aspects relating to the festival were colored by his previous experiences. Without an American orchestral precedent to help him, the conductor instead transferred his own practical experiences

52Rose Thomas, 529.

53Thomas, 2: 31.
as American musician to later endeavors. Drawing upon the description of Thomas within this chapter, this study will demonstrate why Thomas believed Bach’s B-Minor Mass to be ideal for the 1902 festival and why he made his performance choices.
CHAPTER 2

THE CINCINNATI MUSICAL FESTIVAL

As stated in the previous chapter, Rose Thomas believed the Cincinnati Musical Festival to be one of Theodore Thomas’s most significant accomplishments.¹ Both Charles Russell and George P. Upton echoed her opinion of the importance of this festival.² It was an important milestone not only for the conductor but also for the musical history of America. Unfortunately, this event has received a disproportionately small amount of attention in contemporary research as compared with other aspects of Thomas’s career. Current research has concentrated on the foundation of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the symphonic legacy created by Thomas, and Thomas’s tumultuous relationship with both Wagner’s music and the composer himself. Due to their prominence in contemporary American culture, it is understandable that scholars have focused on these topics. However, the stature and national exposure of the Cincinnati Musical Festival was arguably equal to or greater than that of any other musical event during and immediately after Thomas’s lifetime. Through several idiosyncrasies of this festival Thomas

¹This festival is known by different titles, depending on the source consulted. While some refer to the event as the May Festival, others call it the Cincinnati Musical Festival. This festival still occurs today and is currently known as the Cincinnati May Festival. Because the title of the organizing committee during Thomas’s lifetime was the “Cincinnati Musical Festival Association,” this study will employ that title.

²“The veritable grandeur and splendor of this achievement [the Cincinnati Musical Festival], to which the West, or the East either, in 1873 has known no fellow, strikes deep into the popular mind; not alone in Cincinnati but throughout all the interior. It is talked of in hundreds of communities represented in that vast throng in the old exposition building; it continues to be talked of. It has disseminated music into the remote regions as the heart sends blood to the finger tips.” Russell, 92.

“The sixteen biennial festivals held at Cincinnati between 1873 and 1904 mark the highest achievements of Mr. Thomas in programme making, as well as in programme performance. They have made Cincinnati famous as a musical centre, but, more important than this, they have almost immeasurably advanced the musical progress of the West by stimulating the growth of choral societies, arousing healthy competition, and influencing the musical culture of the whole country.” Thomas, 2: 156.
found opportunities to accomplish more than had been attainable with his touring orchestra. With larger performing forces, he was able to introduce different works to a new audience and also effect a more profound change in American culture. The framework for this festival was not Thomas’s own idea, however; it was based upon his observations of previous American music festivals.

**Early Festival Experiences**

In 1865 Thomas observed a week-long *Sängerfest* at the New York Academy of Music. This festival, which included the participation of several thousand singers, featured performances by German-language choirs from across the eastern United States. Although the *Sängerfest* was less formal than some other the festivals, such as that of the Handel and Haydn Society in Boston, both had a common characteristic, the desire to amass the largest choir possible.³

Thomas invited the Handel and Haydn Society to sing Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony with his orchestra at the final concert of the season for the New York Symphony Concerts on April 26, 1873, a proposition to which the organization eagerly agreed. While this concert alone did not constitute a festival, it provided Thomas an opportunity to work with a festival choir prior to his experience in Cincinnati the following month. The Handel and Haydn Society asked to perform other works at this concert, conducted by their own Carl Zerrahn. Through sharing conducting duties, Thomas was able to observe an experienced choral conductor working with a large vocal ensemble.⁴

³Schabas, 28. Demonstrating the significance placed upon the sheer size of the vocal forces, most period sources made certain to note the size of the chorus when discussing festivals. Often this figure was stated even before identification of the soloists or the program.

⁴Although Schabas states that the 500-member Handel and Haydn Society chorus joined with Thomas’s orchestra for this concert, the records kept by Perkins and Dwight specify that only 400 members made the journey to New York. Charles C. Perkins and John S. Dwight, *History of the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston, Massachusetts*, vol. 1 (New York: Da Capo, 1977), 328-331. Carl Zerrahn (1826-1909) was a member of the Germania Musical Society and conducted the Handel and Haydn Society from 1854 to 1898.
The use of 400 singers for performances of Beethoven and Handel is well beyond the current conception of proper proportions for such music. In contrast, contemporary critics praised Thomas’s restraint in using such modest numbers.\(^5\) This response is understandable when Thomas’s concert is compared with Patrick S. Gilmore’s World Peace Jubilee, which had been held only one year previously in Boston. Gilmore’s performance included approximately 20,000 performers and contributed to his moniker “high priest of the colossal.”\(^6\)

Although the ensembles of the Cincinnati festivals never reached such gargantuan proportions as those of Gilmore’s ensembles, Thomas conducted his share of enormous festival choirs elsewhere. Most notable among these was Thomas’s leadership of a 5,500-person chorus at the inaugural ceremonies of the World’s Columbian Exposition in 1893.\(^7\) A 200-piece orchestra, two large military bands, and two drum corps of 50 performers each accompanied this chorus. Due to the enormous size of the ensemble, Thomas used a white handkerchief instead of his usual baton to achieve clarity of pulse.\(^8\) Clearly, a common element in the marketing of such events was the size of the performing musical forces.

**Nineteenth-Century Cincinnati**

Cincinnati was not as musically developed as any of the large cities further to the east, but its culture proved vital to the success of the music festival. The most important component of the festival was the inclusion of singing societies throughout the area. By 1873 Cincinnati had a history of Germanic singing societies that rivaled any other in the country. This was due in part

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\(^5\)Schabas, 53.


\(^7\)This exposition celebrated the 400th anniversary of Columbus’s discovery of America. The actual festival was delayed until 1893, although the inaugural ceremonies were conducted in 1892 to maintain the purpose of the celebration.

\(^8\)Rose Thomas, 380-82.
to increased German immigration in the nineteenth century. Although the Irish constituted the largest proportion of nineteenth-century immigrants up to 1850, Germans were the most numerous immigrating group for every decade thereafter.\(^9\) The reason for such considerable representation of German culture in Cincinnati is explained by George Stephenson in *A History of American Immigration*. Stephenson divides the waves of immigration into three periods. The second and third periods exerted the most influence on America and consequently on Cincinnati’s musical development. In the second wave, which spanned from 1815 to 1852, “political refugees and intellectual men” made up a noteworthy portion of the arrivals. These immigrants were motivated to leave their country at least in part by the political turmoil in Germany. Stephenson describes the third wave as “the exodus after 1852, which assumed the proportions of a stampede.” During this period economic concerns were paramount, and most of these immigrants held occupations as “agriculturalists, small tradesmen, mechanics, and common laborers.”\(^{10}\)

The large number of immigrants during this period is not the sole reason that Germans exercised such influence over American musical culture. According to American immigration scholar, Maldwyn Allen Jones, although all immigrant groups tended to form communities in America with those of similar backgrounds, German immigrants developed more culturally homogeneous communities than those of any other ethnicity. Attempts at political reform in Germany had been thwarted. America presented the prospect of a developing nation where liberals and intellectuals could realize the ideals of German nationalism by creating a new Germany.\(^{11}\) For this reason, some less developed areas of America, where German intellectuals could exert more influence over city development, were settled and populated by a disproportionate number of German immigrants.

One such city was Cincinnati. By 1850 almost one third of Cincinnati’s population was

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\(^{10}\)Ibid., 43.

German. As a result of German cultural loyalty, the inhabitants of the city created multiple choruses and in 1870 developed a chorus so large that the city built a 5,000-seat exposition hall for its performances.

The accomplished singing societies of the area allowed Thomas more flexibility regarding the difficulty of his programs. As mentioned in the previous chapter, he believed that the country’s instrumental performers of American birth could not yet compare to the greatest American-born singers. Additionally, the predominance of German culture enabled Thomas to continue with his preference for Austrian and German music throughout his festival programming. While there was a considerable number of German compositions at every festival, comparison of the nationalities of composers represented at the first Cincinnati Musical Festival with those of the final two festivals (see Table 2.1) reveals its immensely disproportionate German representation. Thomas programmed so many German compositions at the first festival that it seems probable that he hoped to attract the predominantly German community to the festival by appealing to its heritage.

If one considers Handel to have been a German composer, 93% of the compositions at the first festival were written by German composers.\textsuperscript{12} While performances at the later festivals still contained many German compositions, in 1902 only 66% of the compositions were by Germans, and in 1904 the amount only slightly increased to 75%. Additionally, the later festivals included nationalities not represented in 1873, such as Czech and Russian.

\textsuperscript{12}The reason for considering Handel to be a German composer is that Thomas would likely have done the same. He was more concerned with the musical characteristics of compositions than the exact geographic association. This was demonstrated with Thomas choices when supporting American composers. He felt no compunction showing great support to lesser known American composers, however, they were critiqued by Thomas’s Austro-German standards of musical composition.
Table 2.1. Number of works performed by various composers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1873*</th>
<th>1902</th>
<th>1904</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Handel – 8</td>
<td>Bach – 4</td>
<td>Elgar – 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven – 7</td>
<td>Wagner – 4</td>
<td>Beethoven – 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haydn – 5</td>
<td>Elgar – 2</td>
<td>Mozart – 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mendelssohn – 5</td>
<td>R. Strauss – 2</td>
<td>Bach – 2</td>
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<td>Mozart – 4</td>
<td>Franck – 1</td>
<td>Wagner – 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wagner – 4</td>
<td>Gluck – 1</td>
<td>R. Strauss – 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>J. Strauss – 4</td>
<td>Mozart – 1</td>
<td>Schubert – 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schumann – 3</td>
<td>Beethoven – 1</td>
<td>Weber – 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meyerbeer – 3</td>
<td>Brahms – 1</td>
<td>Liszt – 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schubert – 2</td>
<td>Handel – 1</td>
<td>Berlioz – 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weber – 2</td>
<td>Suk – 1</td>
<td>Gluck – 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bach – 2</td>
<td>Massenet – 1</td>
<td>Bruckner – 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nicolai – 1</td>
<td>Berlioz – 1</td>
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<td>Randegger – 1</td>
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<td>Tchaikovsky – 1</td>
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<td>Méhul – 1</td>
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<td>Rossini – 1</td>
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<td>Parry – 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liszt – 1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Three choral arrangements of American patriotic songs (“Sound the Loud Timbrel,” “America,” and “The Star Spangled Banner”) included in the festival are not listed, because they were not included in the performance for artistic reasons. Thomas programmed these works as the conclusion of the second matinee on 8 May 1873, when they were performed by choruses from local public schools with the Cincinnati Orchestra.
Artistic Control

Because there were few competing interests in Cincinnati within the cultivated musical tradition, Thomas managed to obtain nearly complete control over the specific details of the festival. He set the program, eventually exerted considerable control over the choice of soloists, and served as the final authority on all musical issues.

The festival began as a collaborative effort between Theodore Thomas and George and Maria Nichols. The Nicholases were prominent in Cincinnati’s high society and began collaboration with Thomas on the grand festival in 1872. From the beginning, there was friction between Thomas and George Nichols, each of whom seemed unable to relinquish any control over festival details. Thomas objected to Nichols’s choices of soloists in the first festival and was supported by the press in this criticism. Although both men managed to work together on a few festivals, their eventual collaboration with the Cincinnati College of Music in 1878 caused the final irreparable rift. As president of the institution, Nichols hired Thomas as the college’s musical director. As with the problems the two men encountered during the Cincinnati Musical Festivals, Thomas and Nichols had different ideas about the priorities of the newly established college of music. These contrasting aims caused immediate problems. Representing a more pragmatic and financially concerned viewpoint, Nichols placed the profitability of the college over Thomas’s high musical standards. When Thomas presented the school with an ultimatum, the board of directors chose Nichols’s vision over that of Thomas. The board of directors at the Cincinnati Musical Festival, however, recognized the importance of Theodore Thomas to the festival and accepted Nichols’s resignation as president of the board.\textsuperscript{13}

From this point forward Thomas maintained control of all musical aspects of the festival. The Festival Associations’ minutes from 1902 exemplify Thomas’s control throughout the entire year. Although Thomas was not present at any meetings, the committee’s consideration of every soloist occurred only in conjunction with Thomas; they never acted alone. Additionally, every request made by Thomas was approved, including specifications about who could observe

\textsuperscript{13}Rose Thomas, 175.
The comparative profitability of the Cincinnati Musical Festival also allowed Thomas freedom in his programming and performance choices. As compared with the performances of his touring orchestra, the festivals at Cincinnati were less accountable to ticket sales. Thus, whereas Thomas’s orchestra performance series frequently included request concerts in attempts to bolster ticket sales, he never felt compelled to resort to such measures with the Cincinnati festivals. While the touring concerts only turned a profit if the ticket sales covered the expenses of the concert, many American festivals were backed by a board of guarantors who assured funds to cover a certain amount of deficit. This became the tradition in nineteenth-century America and was frequently the manner in which wealthy members of the community chose to contribute to culturally enriching endeavors. These individuals believed in the civic value of such pursuits and financially facilitated musical events that never could have existed on ticket sales alone. As a result of this civic-mindedness, a percentage of tickets at the Cincinnati festivals were offered at cheaper prices to include a greater cross-section of the community. Although Rose Thomas’s memoirs state that every Cincinnati Musical Festival at least broke even, this assertion is incorrect. The first festivals were extremely successful financially. Notable among these early festivals was the May festival of 1878, which finished with a surplus of $32,518.86. This festival was successful because it was the first year in the newly built Cincinnati Music Hall. There were other festivals, however, that did not fare as well, often as the result of extenuating economic or social circumstances. In these instances the guarantors covered the deficits. This safeguard made Thomas less directly accountable to ticket sales, allowing him the

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14Cincinnati Musical Festival Executive Committee Minutes (1901-02), preserved in the collection of the Cincinnati Historical Society.


16Rose Thomas, 141.

17After financial success with the first festival, the next three festivals did not fare nearly as well. The 1880 festival ended with a surplus of $7508.94, but the 1882 and 1884 festivals ended with deficits of $8120.67 and $18,957.19, respectively. Schabas, 133-34.
freedom to program more difficult or educationally enriching works and take chances that might otherwise have been foolhardy. This was undoubtedly a reassuring guarantee when Thomas considered programming Bach’s B minor Mass, a composition about which the Handel & Haydn Society records stated of their 1887 performance, “It [the society] could not undertake to bring out the Mass entire; that would have been too much for a single effort, and the Mass would have been too long for any audience.”\(^{18}\) Thomas, conversely, felt confident performing the Mass in its entirety in 1902 and again in 1904.

Examination of a program booklet from the 1904 Cincinnati Musical Festival shows the priorities the public placed upon the festival’s achievements. First and most apparent is the importance of the Cincinnati Music Hall and Theodore Thomas, both captured in images on the cover of the program. The 1904 festival was Thomas’s last, and he was seen as the figurehead of all festival events. As early as 1875 the conductor was viewed as the figure most prominently associated with the festival. Posters advertising the 1875 festival illustrated this point. As the poster is described in *Dwight’s Journal of Music*, “Theodore Thomas, mounted upon a prancing steed, is leading up a solid phalanx of fiddlers to the assault, and a heavy battery of trombones and ophicleides is hurling bass notes into the forts.”\(^{19}\) Thomas had indisputably become the musical “general” for the city of Cincinnati.

**The Grand Cincinnati Music Hall**

More significant to the public than Thomas was the Cincinnati Music Hall, the symbol of the city’s musical refinement and achievements. Although the opening of the same 1904 program includes a brief statement of the association’s goals and explains the significance of the festival to the development of America’s musical culture, after this explanation the contents turn

\(^{18}\)Charles C. Perkins and John S. Dwight, 482.

immediately to information about the hall.20 The order of festival information in the program explains the order of the Cincinnati public’s festival priorities. First mentioned in the program is the cost of the hall at $300,000; the inclusion of a $30,000 organ is mentioned second. The program goes on to boast that these expenditures give Cincinnati the largest music hall and organ in the United States. Tellingly, the description of these two items does not mention their acoustic quality or refinement of construction but only their immense size. Finally, with these prerequisites in place, the program boasts that Cincinnati can now host the greatest singers in the world.21

As with Thomas’s first large choral concert in New York, the emphasis on size in the Cincinnati Musical Festival must be understood within cultural context. Before the 1884 festival musical columnist Henry Krehbiel praised Cincinnati’s concern with producing a performance that was above the sensationalism so prevalent in social, commercial, artistic and political activities.22 While the rest of the country was enticing the American public with constantly bigger spectacles, the Cincinnati Musical Festival seemed to be a comparative haven of distinction and refinement.

Despite complete control regarding almost every aspect of the festival, there was one choice to which Thomas always remained inexorably bound; all the works had to be performed in the Cincinnati Music Hall. Before 1878 the previous two Cincinnati Musical Festivals had taken place in Sänger Hall, a wooden auditorium that was erected primarily for the purpose of singing festivals, although it was also versatile enough for other kinds of expositions and municipal occasions. This hall originally seated 5,000 people, and it was enlarged to include

20The first circular issued announcing the festival stated that the aim was “...to elevate and strengthen the standard of choral and instrumental music, and also to bring about harmony of action between the musical societies of the country and more especially of the West.”


22Schabas, 134.
room for an additional 3,000 standing attendees in preparation for the second festival. Thomas discussed this hall in his autobiography when reflecting on his programming:

The Ninth Symphony for instance, I have determined not to give again in the immense halls in which I have had to play of late years in Chicago, New York, and Cincinnati. It is an injustice both to the work and the audience. The impression made by this work, and the excitement caused at the first Festival in Cincinnati, where we gave it in a wooden hall of moderate size, called the Sängerfest Halle, we have never been able to repeat in the new hall of larger dimensions. When I speak of a large hall, I mean large in the European sense of the term. Our monster American halls and theatres are fit only for mass meetings and horse shows. Orchestral music of every school is ineffective in them.

The new hall to which Thomas referred is the Cincinnati Music Hall, the building where every festival has taken place since its erection in 1878. Although the new hall was vastly larger than its predecessor, presenting new challenges to the conductor, it vastly improved on other weaknesses of Sänger Hall. The dimensions of the new hall are described multiple times in Dwight’s Journal of Music. The auditorium spans a length of 192 feet and a width of 112 feet without any obstructing columns, and, from the back aisle of the auditorium, one author wondered how any voice could possibly fill the entire hall. In the arches around the keyboard of the hall’s great organ is a reminder of the dominance of Austro-German music at the festival. Each arch has a name carved upon it: Mozart, Bach, Handel, Beethoven, and Mendelssohn.

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23 Ibid., 64.

24 Thomas, 2: 30-31. Although Thomas states that he could not reproduce the favorable performance of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony in Cincinnati Music Hall, he still performed the work at multiple May festivals. It was actually one of the most performed works during Thomas’s tenure with the festival. He conducted the Symphony twice in Sänger Hall in 1873 and 1875, and then performed it four more times in Cincinnati Music Hall, in 1878, 1894, 1896, and 1904. Admittedly, there was a span of six festivals between 1878 and 1894 when Thomas abstained from performing the work. This was possibly the time during which Thomas felt that the work could not receive an adequate performance.

25 One significant drawback to Sänger Hall was the metal roof that exacerbated the distracting noise of spring rain showers. Robert C. Vitz, “‘Im wunderschönen Monat Mai’: Organizing the Great Cincinnati May Festival 1878,” American Music 4/3 (1986): 310.
Next to Beethoven’s name is a segment of melody from the Ninth Symphony.  

Financing for the Cincinnati Music Hall came through a generous donation by one of the richest advocates of the festival, Reuben R. Springer, a retired Cincinnati merchant. Springer’s proposal for the building of this musical hall stressed the importance of making the venture a community effort. Additionally, he requested that the hall rental fees be kept at the lowest cost possible while still allowing for the upkeep of the hall. He offered to pay half of the total expenses and wanted nothing more than to be known as one of the donors to the hall’s construction.

This opportunity presented the prospect of an ideal financial situation for the festival committee because of the hall’s low rental fees. The seating capacity of the hall, however, caused concerns during preparations for the 1878 festival. Church and George Jones, two members of the Board of Directors, reported that the new hall would only seat 4,200 people.  

Despite the diminished seating capacity, the performance hall was still exceptionally large inside, introducing all of the acoustic conditions that one would expect in a massive hall. Only performances on the most grandiose scale could fill this hall acoustically, sacrificing clarity and transparency of musical texture. Theodore Thomas, always the consummate salesman of instrumental music, was determined to find a way to make the festival work in the new hall. He understood the financial advantage of using the structure and no doubt, after toiling for years with attempts to procure a permanent hall for his orchestra in New York, was moved by this vote of confidence from the community of Cincinnati. Thomas had previously set a precedent for


27Vitz, 319. Other sources offer different estimations of the hall’s total seating capacity. Eldred Thierstein and Charlotte Shockley conservatively estimate in the Cincinnati entry for The New Grove Dictionary of Music that the Cincinnati Music Hall had a seating capacity of 3,600. Other sources cite the seating capacity as high as 4,400 with a total capacity (including standing attendees) at 7,000. This was still well below the total capacity of 8,000 attendees at Sänger Hall. Eldred Thierstein and Charlotte Shockley, “Cincinnati, 2. May Festival,” in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 2d ed., edited by Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 2001), 5: 859.
dealing with adverse acoustic circumstances in other situations, including the earlier performances at Sänger Hall. Although the conductor wrote years later in his autobiography that he preferred Sänger Hall to the later massively sized halls, he only made this comment on a comparative basis. Sänger Hall’s acoustics had not been ideal, but Thomas had demonstrated his understanding of the importance of the public’s confidence in the festival by attending multiple town meetings and providing his assurance of the acoustic quality of Sänger Hall.\textsuperscript{28} Thomas acted no differently when facing the acoustic circumstances of the Cincinnati Music Hall. While never complaining publicly about the acoustic conditions, he adapted his chosen works as well as possible to his respective venue. The general public took this aspect of the performance practice in stride because it was already customary and therefore expected with large festival performances.\textsuperscript{29}

Despite the fact that neither Sänger Hall nor the Cincinnati Music Hall presented ideal conditions, Theodore Thomas was well aware of the need to make the Cincinnati Musical Festival a success and therefore accepted the less than ideal acoustic conditions. The festival provided a consistent biennial obligation for his orchestra, was one of his most financially secure business pursuits, and provided the Midwest in one week with more exposure to the music that Thomas valued than any other performance series. With complete freedom to set the program for each festival, Thomas was able to educate the audiences in the music he believed best represented the achievements of the cultivated musical tradition. Additionally, the festival allowed Thomas the opportunity to branch out by performing choral works for which he had not previously possessed the resources. Thanks in large part to the German singing tradition there, the abilities of the choral societies in Cincinnati and the surrounding areas were as high as or higher than anywhere else in the country. This allowed the conductor to choose his repertoire

\textsuperscript{28}Schabas, 54. There is some debate as to whether Sänger Hall’s acoustics were as bad as Ezra Schabas claims. In an article written just after the 1875 festival performances in \textit{Dwight’s Journal of Music}, the acoustic properties of the hall are praised; I. R. and J. R. G. H., 25.

\textsuperscript{29}For the 1875 performance of Bach’s Magnificat, Thomas used augmented accompaniment by Robert Franz. The reviewer excused this choice by stating that the piece was performed as “nearly all Bach’s principal vocal works must be given nowadays.” Ibid., 26.
based solely upon artistic concerns, without regard for the difficulty of the choral parts.\textsuperscript{30} Thomas also developed programs for a community that was inclined to share his love of music from the Austrian and German tradition.

The only difficulty for Thomas was to adapt each composition to the large performance halls that housed the Cincinnati Musical Festivals, halls better suited for mass meetings and expositions than for musical performances. Thomas researched his adaptations extensively and believed, despite frequent changes to the music, that he maintained the spirit of each work in performance. The best preserved example of Thomas’s approach to this process is the score to the 1902 performance of Bach’s B-Minor Mass. Thomas extensively researched this composition and determined that it needed as much adaptation as any other work performed. He achieved a successful performance; the work was received eagerly and performed again at the very next festival. Chapter 4 will discuss the specifics of how Thomas adapted this composition for its performance venue and its audience.

\textsuperscript{30}The issue of the difficulty of the choral parts was a paramount reason that Bach’s B-Minor Mass was only performed a few times before the 1902 Cincinnati Musical Festival. This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 3

BACH IN AMERICA

At the turn of the nineteenth century the music of Johann Sebastian Bach was virtually unknown to most Americans. While concert repertoire introduced the compositions of Mozart and Haydn, it rarely looked any further back through history. Over the second half of nineteenth century this situation changed, as audiences became better acquainted with historical performances. The primary impetus for this movement came from Europe, but certain Americans helped Bach’s dissemination into American culture. Although Theodore Thomas played a significant role in the eventual acceptance of Bach’s compositions in America, the conductor was only one of many significant factors. This chapter will first discuss the brief history of Bach in America before Thomas’s career. It will then identify Thomas’s contributions in introducing the composer to audiences across the nation.

As with many aspects of America’s cultivated musical tradition, the cultural standards followed slowly after those of Europe. The development of art music in America at first occurred primarily in the church, capitalizing on the nation’s ardent religious devotion. Church services and rudimentary piano books occasionally included Bach’s music, but his music did not appear on the American concert stage.¹ This primarily stemmed from practical reasons, such as the lack of full pedal boards on most American organs, but it also resulted from aesthetic considerations.² At the turn of the nineteenth century American audiences were completely unfamiliar with Bach’s music; the composer’s music was only really contemplated among musicians because of its pedagogical uses in demonstrating compositional techniques such as


²Most organs in America were based upon English models and did not have the fully developed pedal-boards needed to perform Bach’s music. Karl Kroeger, “Johann Sebastian Bach in Nineteenth-Century America,” The Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute 22/1 (1991), 33.
fugal construction. The composer’s music was not as melodious and easily accessible as the current compositional style, a disadvantage compounded by the undeveloped musical tastes of most American audiences. As a result, there are a few accounts from the first half of the century that support Bach’s music for its academic ingenuity and complex design, but this support rarely led to a place on the actual concert stage.

It was not until well after Felix Mendelssohn’s revival performance of the St. Matthew Passion in 1829 and the subsequent resumption of Bach performances across Europe that America finally took notice of the composer. Although his reintroduction to Europe was most influenced by the Berlin Singakademie’s performances, it was the publication of the Bach-Gesellschaft series beginning in 1851 that brought the composer to prominence in America. This series made Bach’s music accessible to America, and performances ensued shortly after its publication.

American Contributions

Over the next few decades many different American musicians played significant roles in the introduction of Bach’s music to America. Two of these individuals, Theodore Thomas and John Knowles Paine, each premiered many of the composer’s works. John Knowles Paine was the most influential figure in the dissemination of Bach’s organ music and thus profoundly impacted church music throughout the northeast States. As Harvard University’s organist for

3Ibid.

4According to the “Verzeichniss der Mitglieder” in the front of the first volume of the Bach Gesellschaft edition, among the notable organizations that first subscribed to the Bach-Gesellschaft series were the Peabody Institute, Harvard Musical Association (founded by John S. Dwight), and Yale College. Theodore Thomas was among the twelve individual American subscribers. Johann Sebastian Bach, Werke, vol. 1, ed. Julius Rietz (Leipzig: Bach Gesellschaft, 1856; reprinted Ann Arbor, Mich.: J. W. Edwards, 1947), xii.

forty-three years, Paine played a significant role in introducing Boston audiences to Bach’s music. His role was facilitated by the university’s installation in 1863 of a German-made organ from the firm of E. F. Walker. This organ, with more pedals than the prevalent English models, made the performance of Bach’s compositions possible. Paine performed Bach’s Toccata in D Minor for a private hearing after the organ’s installation and the Toccata in F Major for a public unveiling two days later.6

Despite Paine’s public performances, his role as an organist made a greater impact in the church than the concert hall. Originally hired only to teach sacred music, Paine became Harvard University’s first professor of music in 1875. The Boston organist capitalized on this opportunity, using his position as a musical authority to express his support for Bach’s compositions.

Theodore Thomas first encountered the compositions of John Knowles Paine in 1874, when the Thomas Orchestra participated in the Third Triennial Festival in Boston, which included the oratorio, St. Peter, written by the composer. Thomas and Paine began a lifelong friendship, and over the next few decades Thomas programmed many of Paine’s works. Paine, who was educated in Germany and one of the most reputable performers of Bach’s music in America, showed great respect for Thomas.7

Theodore Thomas’s eventual success advocating the music of Johann Sebastian Bach was due in large part to fortuitous circumstance, but it was also the result of deliberate actions by the conductor. Reviews from critics across the second half of the nineteenth century demonstrate the shifting attitudes in American culture towards the music of Bach. His music however, was more readily accepted in academic discourse than performance reception. Dwight’s Journal of Music, one of the foremost American literary advocates of J. S. Bach, greatly influenced the positive Northeastern reception of this composer. To aid this process Thomas carefully cultivated the public’s taste for Bach’s music through progressive programming and adaptation of the music to the contemporary concert stage. Although Thomas made efforts to prepare American audiences

6Clark, 341-42.

7Schabas, 63.
to appreciate Bach, he understood that he also had to prepare Bach for the idiosyncrasies of the American audience. This entailed adapting the composer’s chamber ensemble music to a full orchestra for performance in the large halls of America. As a result of Thomas’s zeal to perform more American premieres than his competitors, Bach’s music reached audiences even more quickly. The combination of ideal timing, adequate conditions, and smart presentation choices assisted the integration of Bach’s music into the American concert repertoire.

**Religious Associations**

Although Thomas’s performances took place in a concert hall, there was little to differentiate them from religious ceremonies. Particularly in festival performances, which often featured oratorios and cantatas, audiences responded more like a church congregation than a concert audience. It would seem probable that religious associations would have provided an additional draw for Thomas to the music of Bach, although the conductor himself was not forthcoming in expressing exact denominational affiliation. Thomas’s first wife, Minna Rhodes, was the daughter of a prominent Episcopalian minister. When Thomas consulted his friend William Mason about pursuing Minna, Mason said, “Miss Rhodes is thoroughly American—for instance goes to church on Sundays—and I don’t believe that you ever went to church in your whole life.”

Later in Thomas’s career, while touring the South, he revealed slightly more about the limited extent of his religious beliefs in a letter to Rose Thomas. He wrote from Nashville, Tennessee, “After the first concert a gentleman came rushing into my room, who I learned afterwards was a recent convert of the evangelist Moody—a nice man, whole-souled and sincere. Seizing my hand he inquired earnestly, ‘Mr. Thomas, are you a Christian?’ I did not know quite what to reply to this unexpected demand, as his idea of a Christian and mine might not blend. So I took refuge behind you and murmured something to the effect that ‘my wife went to church’.”

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8Ibid., 52.
9Ibid., 20.
The day after the Nashville concert, Thomas was invited to a picnic at General Jackson’s old home. Before lunch began, the same gentleman from the previous night requested that Thomas ask the blessing. Thomas was preparing to say the Lord’s prayer in German, his best approximation of ‘Grace,’ when he was saved from the dilemma. A woman who seemed to sense his unease offered that a present descendent of General Jackson should ask the blessing.\textsuperscript{10}

From these accounts it initially seems that religion did not play a significant role in Theodore Thomas’s life. There is no evidence that the conductor ever regularly attended a church of any denomination. Admittedly, his infrequent participation at church may have resulted in part from his strenuous touring schedule. Due to his private nature, it is difficult to glean additional details about his religious beliefs. Although he seems to have been relatively unconcerned with the specifics of religious doctrine among the different denominations, he clearly harbored a generalized Christian sentiment. Thomas concerned himself more with the authenticity of people’s worship, than the details of their beliefs. The conductor demonstrated this in the previously quoted article from \textit{Scribner’s Magazine}, stating, “In the church, where first of all sincerity should prevail, and where nothing but healthy food should be given, the music is looked upon as an attraction and given as an amusement.”\textsuperscript{11} As well, he associated Bach’s music with his own ill-defined beliefs. Thomas made no efforts to disassociate his concert performances from these religious associations and even took steps to blur the line between secular and sacred. The conductor referred to his concerts at times as “sermons in tones,” and was quoted referring to popular music as having “more or less the devil in it.”\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{Thomas’s Performance History with Bach’s Music}

Through examination of the history of Thomas’s performances of J. S. Bach’s music, parallels can be drawn to the conductor’s treatment of contemporary works. When he chose to

\textsuperscript{10}Rose Thomas, 372-74.

\textsuperscript{11}Thomas, 1: 269.

\textsuperscript{12}Horowitz, 315.
program the music of J. S. Bach, Theodore Thomas demonstrated the same seemingly prophetic abilities that led him to champion the music of Wagner, Liszt, and Richard Strauss. Although it had been over a century since Bach died, Thomas introduced the composer’s music to America in a similar fashion to that of lesser-known living composers. He incorporated the works along with other more easily accessible and expected compositions in order to maintain audience support. Already early in his career Thomas had demonstrated this approach, performing Bach’s compositions at the Mason-Thomas chamber concerts as a violinist.

Thomas made an intensive effort to introduce America to as many works as possible. He was able to procure new scores otherwise unavailable in America and included as many new works as possible in his programs. Thomas did this in part because of personal pride, but also because it was good for business. Upon the arrival of Leopold Damrosch in America in 1871 to conduct the Männersangverein Arion, a rivalry began with the Thomas Orchestra. Both conductors’ ensembles were based in New York, and each strove to present the American premiere of any new work. This rivalry stimulated America’s musical culture, decreasing delay between European and American premieres, as well as increasing the self-confidence of American audiences regarding their own development.

Because of the prominence of composers such as Bach and Wagner in the current musical canon, it is difficult to appreciate the significance of Thomas’s support of these composers. However, many period critics initially disapproved of this music despite Thomas’s fervent support.

-t-, “New York, April 19,” Dwight’s Journal of Music 13/5 (1 May 1858), 40. Thomas performed Bach’s Chaconne, BWV 1004, for solo violin on April 11, 1858. The critic praised Thomas’s performance, stating, “Decidedly the most wonderful performance of the concert was Mr. Thomas’s playing of the celebrated Chaconne, by Bach.” Despite the critic’s positive reception of both Thomas’s performance and the composition itself, the review also reveals the typical stance towards Bach’s compositions among period audiences. Bach’s Chaconne is called a “strange” composition, which must be heard many times to be appreciated. Additionally, the critic mentions that the work has no regular form to assist the memory, demonstrating the typical lack of understanding among nineteenth-century audiences of Baroque compositional forms. Thomas’s choice in programming is said to “betoken Art-love and reverence,” a description that intertwines the religious associations with artistic concerns.

Harold Earle Johnson, First Performances in America to 1900: Works with Orchestra (Detroit: Information Coordinators, 1979), xvi-xvii.
To this end the second volume of his autobiography makes special note of all the compositions premiered in America under Thomas’s baton.\textsuperscript{16} A portion of the first volume takes this process a step further and includes a list, compiled by Bernhard Ziehn, of major European works believed to have been premiered by Thomas in America before receiving their European premieres.\textsuperscript{17} This list includes compositions such as Anton Bruckner’s Symphony no. 7 (1893), César Franck’s Symphony in D Minor (1900), and Franz Liszt’s \textit{Mephisto Waltz} (1893). Unfortunately, this list is plagued with inaccuracies. Bruckner’s symphony was premiered in Leipzig in 1884, Franck’s symphony received its premiere at the Paris Conservatory in 1889, and Liszt’s waltz was first performed in Budapest in 1881. Despite the falseness of Ziehn’s assertions, the choice to include this information (believed by Thomas to be correct) demonstrates the conductor’s concern with discovering new works. Although these were not the actual premieres of the listed works, the conductor, ensemble, and audience believed that the information was true. Theodore Thomas proceeded in a similar manner with the music of J. S. Bach. Even though he knew he would not present the world premieres of these compositions, he wanted to be the first to reintroduce them.

Thomas faced great difficulty bringing the music of Bach to the modern orchestra and concert hall. The Baroque composer’s musical style required careful adaptation, but as mentioned in the previous chapter, even those audiences who were familiar with Bach’s music were so accustomed to augmented adaptations that programs seldom bothered to note changes from the original parts. In addition to augmenting orchestral compositions, Thomas developed his own full orchestra arrangements of various chamber works, including various suites and sonatas. He also performed adaptations for full orchestra by other composers, including various organ works.

The chronological list of American premieres of J. S. Bach’s music by Theodore Thomas shown in Table 3.1 has been extracted from \textit{First Performances in America to 1900: Works with

\footnotesize

\textsuperscript{16}Thomas, 2: 357-80.

\textsuperscript{17}Thomas, 1: 228.
Orchestra by Harold Earle Johnson. Although this list includes only the works premiered by Thomas, he also performed a considerable number of Bach compositions that had already been introduced to America.

The Thomas Programming Technique

Thomas’s introduction of Bach to America was gradual. As stated previously, Thomas possessed rigid ideals regarding the worth of certain music. He also exhibited a clever and enterprising intellect, however, which he used when encouraging the musical taste of American audiences. While the conductor always maintained a clear idea of his final musical goals, he was careful not to alienate his audiences in the process. Thomas’s effective concert programming was his most often utilized method to balance his own musical values with those of his audience. He possessed an uncanny expertise in this area, a skill as well known as his musical abilities. The results led Thomas to list in the second volume of his autobiography nearly every concert he ever programmed. In addition to these programs, Thomas included a brief discourse in his method of choosing concert repertoire and order.

When explaining his programming priorities, Thomas first mentions his early reliance upon the music of Beethoven due to the composer’s unique ability to teach the uneducated and delight the educated. Secondly, Thomas mentions the importance of creating a properly timed and sufficiently exciting climax, for which the music of Wagner and Beethoven was particularly useful. Additionally, Thomas explains that each piece should prepare the next, allowing a natural crescendo and never creating an anticlimactic moment.

After explaining the basic framework for his concert order, Thomas laments the difficulty of programming to popular taste while also maintaining the unity of the program. In addition, he found it particularly challenging to expand the public interest to musical masters other than Beethoven and Wagner, the pillars of his concert material. Thomas next addresses the dangers of

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18 Johnson, 6-19.
Table 3.1. American premieres of J. S. Bach’s music by Theodore Thomas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composition</th>
<th>Ensemble</th>
<th>Location and Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concerto for Three Claviers no. 1 in D Minor, BWV 1063</td>
<td>Eisfeld Soirée*</td>
<td>New York, Dodworth’s Hall 26 February 1856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Performer)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concerto for Two Claviers no. 2 in C Major, BWV 1061</td>
<td>Mason-Thomas Soirée*</td>
<td>New York, Dodworth’s Hall 21 April 1863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Performer)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toccata for Organ in F Major, BWV 540*</td>
<td>New York Symphony Concerts</td>
<td>New York, Steinway Hall 7 January 1865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passacaglia for Organ in C Minor, BWV 582</td>
<td>Thomas Symphony Soirée</td>
<td>New York, Irving Hall 8 April 1865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suite No. 3 in D Major, BWV 1068*</td>
<td>Thomas Symphony Soirée</td>
<td>New York, Steinway Hall 26 October 1867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(trumpets, oboes, and strings)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandenburg Concerto no. 3 in G Major, BWV 1048</td>
<td>Thomas Orchestra</td>
<td>New York, Academy of Music 28 February 1874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suite No. 2 in B Minor, BWV 1067*</td>
<td>Thomas Orchestra</td>
<td>Boston, Music Hall 11 November 1874</td>
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<tr>
<td>(flute and strings)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Concerto for Two Violins in D Minor, BWV 1043</td>
<td>Thomas Orchestra</td>
<td>Philadelphia, Academy of Music 5 February 1875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnificat in D Major, BWV 243*</td>
<td>Cincinnati May Festival</td>
<td>Cincinnati, Exposition Hall 13 May 1875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suite No. 1 in C Major, BWV 1066*</td>
<td>Thomas Orchestra</td>
<td>New York, Steinway Hall 25 March 1876</td>
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<tr>
<td>(oboos and strings)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Prelude, Adagio, Gavotte, Rondo</td>
<td>Brooklyn Philharmonic</td>
<td>Brooklyn, Academy of Music 20 January 1880</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cantata No. 11, BWV 11 “Lobet Gott in seinem Reichen”</td>
<td>[Chicago] May Festival</td>
<td>Chicago, First Church 25 May 1882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass in B Minor, BWV 232 (11 Sections)</td>
<td>Cincinnati May Festival</td>
<td>Cincinnati, Music Hall 19 May 1886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fugue for Organ in A Minor*</td>
<td>Thomas Orchestra</td>
<td>New York, Steinway Hall 6 December 1887</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Denotes pieces labeled in the concert program as “first time,” Thomas’s preferred method of identifying American premieres.19

Thomas performed as a violinist in these chamber performances. The Eisfeld Soirée was named after Theodor Eisfeld, who had shared conducting responsibilities for the Philharmonic with Carl Bergmann.

19Although Leopold Damrosch provided ample competition for Thomas in premiering the works of then living composers such as Wagner and Liszt, Damrosch did not introduce nearly as many compositions by Bach. As compared with Theodore Thomas’s twelve orchestral premieres, Damrosch only premiered two works. Ibid.
the “encore habit,” a nineteenth-century tradition that he fought vehemently throughout his career. He explains that the encore disrupts the carefully planned climax, makes programs unnecessarily long, and fatigues the performers.

The next area of discussion, dealing with the late arrivals of audience members, relates particularly closely to Thomas’s method of programming Bach’s music. This audience habit frustrated Thomas the most and made programming difficult. Although the late arrivals wait until pauses between pieces to take their seats, Thomas believes they cause an equal disturbance to the concert as the alternative. For this reason, he did not open any concert with a symphony.20 This line of reasoning carries significant implications for the order in which Thomas frequently placed Bach’s music. In nearly all of Thomas’s concerts that included works by the composer, Bach’s composition opened the concert. For example, in the previous list of American premieres, Bach’s compositions were placed first on eight of the twelve identified programs. Of the remaining four concerts, Thomas twice performed Bach’s works second (Brandenburg Concerto no. 3 in G Major, BWV 1048 and Prelude, Adagio, Gavotte, Rondo), performed only one in the middle of the program (Toccata for Organ in F Major, BWV 540) and performed one last (Concerto for Three Claviers no. 1 in D Minor, BWV 1063). Although one would assume by Thomas’s descriptions that the first piece of the concert was a throw-away piece because of latecomers, opening with Bach’s compositions satisfied too many components of Thomas’s programming concerns to disregard the advantages.

These works were frequently only one movement, which allowed for less disruption from late arrivals. Additionally, Bach’s compositions, even with expanded instrumentation, would not have created as much excitement for a nineteenth-century audience as the louder climaxes of Beethoven and Wagner. The intellectual demands of Bach’s compositions also called for more concentration, which would be less taxing at the opening of a concert. Finally, those who arrived late were probably less likely to appreciate Bach’s compositions as compared with the perennial favorite contemporary composers. Those who arrived on time demonstrated more devotion to the performance and were more likely to appreciate the less popular compositions. Although

20 Thomas, 2: 15-23.
Thomas undoubtedly respected Bach’s music, the conductor repeatedly demonstrated that the success of the concert was more important than placing preferred composers in a premium position in the concert order. Even so, Thomas made considerable strides increasing American devotion to Bach.

Thomas’s pride in cultivating American audiences to appreciate music such as that of J. S. Bach is evident in the preface to his autobiography. The conductor wrote, “I wish to begin with a statement, to which my friends will bear witness, that I never intended to write my autobiography, or anything else; I desired only to preserve my programmes – representing over half a century of a very important part of the history of music in America – in some permanent form, and this is the result.”21 Thomas’s statement reflects the conductor’s belief that his programs show the progress of the American musical tradition.

The request programs held during the Chicago Summer Night Concerts between 1877 and 1890 (see Figure 3.1) demonstrate the increasing performance of Bach in a community for which there had not been a significant orchestral precedent.22 As described by George B. Carpenter, the manager of this concert series, these performances included only works for which there had been multiple written requests. These concerts were intended to represent the “popular taste of the lighter programme music,” although the descriptor “lighter” applied less each year.23

Admittedly, there was little variety to the requests across the thirteen-year duration of the series. Of the thirty-two total Bach performances, four compositions accounted for the overwhelming majority. These four popular works were the “Pastorale” from the Christmas Oratorio, BWV 248, an Air,24 Gounod’s orchestral arrangement of the first prelude from Book 1 of the Well-Tempered Clavier as “Ave Maria,” and “Prelude, Chorale, and Fugue.”

21Thomas, 1: 15.

22Thomas, 2: 198-214.

23Thomas, 1: 171.

24Based on the Thomas archives at the Newberry Library in Chicago, this Air might have come from Suite no. 3 in D major, BWV 1068.
The fourth request concert in 1889 was unusual in that it opened with three Bach compositions. Additionally, while the previous eight years of request concerts featured only four different works, this 1889 concert introduced three new compositions to the series; they were Suite no. 3 in D Major, BWV 1068, “Sicilienne” and “Bourrée,”\textsuperscript{25} and Fugue in A minor. Thomas’s explanation for the cessation of the series reflects the composer’s contentment with his audience’s development; he explained, “My audiences no longer request. They are satisfied with what satisfies me.”\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{25}Based on the Thomas archives at the Newberry Library in Chicago, the “Sicilienne” might refer to the Flute Sonata no. 2 in E-flat major, BWV 1031. The Belgian musicologist François-Auguste Gevaert (1828-1908) arranged the orchestral version of this work used by Thomas. Likewise, it is possible that the Bourrée, was that of the English Suite no. 2 in A minor, BWV 807. Thomas’s collection has a copy of just the Bourrée I movement from the suite, also arranged for orchestra by Gevaert. Because this musical form appears so frequently in Bach’s compositions, it is difficult to determine the exact composition with any certainty.

\textsuperscript{26}Ibid.
Critical Reception

Theodore Thomas encountered fortuitous timing in introducing Bach’s music to America. The movement to rediscover Bach’s compositions began in Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century. In America, Thomas was not alone in his attempts to introduce Bach. Over the course of his conducting career, despite facing objections over the inaccessibility of Bach’s music, Thomas managed to garner constantly increasing support from critics. As evidenced in the 1858 article in 

Dwight’s Journal of Music cited earlier, Bach, along with Beethoven, Handel, Schumann, and Mendelssohn, was already considered “among the highest in Tone-Art.”27 Significantly, however, in reviewing Bach’s chaconne, the writer seems to have been more impressed with Thomas’s performing abilities than with the composition itself. During the 1860s Bach gained even more prominence in the journal.

A frequent subject of discussion in the various music periodicals was the contrast between Bach and Handel, the two greatest representatives of the old tradition. The treatments of the two composers constantly reinforced the contrasts between their music. Bach was always seen as the profound thinker, the mathematician, and Handel the poet and fertile inventor. The public perception of the two composers became increasingly polarized through each new generalized introduction into the composers’ lives and music.28 Despite the possible stereotypes these articles fostered, the utmost veneration was displayed for the two founding fathers of the then current musical tradition.

In 1861 an article appeared in Dwight’s Journal of Music that briefly studied the influence of Bach’s music upon later composers. The author of this article believed that the lineage of Beethoven’s compositions is more closely tied to Bach’s music than to that of Mozart.

27Article signed -t-, 40.
or Haydn. In consideration of Beethoven’s immense popularity in America during this period, such statements would serve to help Bach’s reputation with American audiences.

Although Bach continued to gain a following among writers and readers of critical discussions of his music, his reception in the concert hall was not always positive. One example of a negative reception is a scathing letter to the editor after a performance of Bach’s Toccata in F, originally published in the Springfield Republican. In this letter the author complains that the fugue is a fury of sound that signifies nothing and makes no more of a musical contribution than a chromatic scale. This complaint was not uncommon. When Dwight’s Journal of Music reproduced the letter, the journal adopted a mocking stance towards the author’s rant. The letter is sarcastically prefaced in the journal with, “. . . he tilts against the windmill of Bach’s Fugues, with such annihilating vehemence, that the opinion of Mozart and Mendelssohn, and all the really great composers, not excepting jovial Rossini, must henceforth pass for nothing. Read! Master Paine, and tremble, and be silent evermore.” A year later, when the Harvard Musical Association performed the same work, this time adapted for full orchestra, it received a positive reception from a different critic. This favorable response, however, was attributed to the belief that the different timbres provided by the orchestra allowed the audience to make sense of the complex polyphony and thus enjoy the performance. Reviews such as this reinforced the belief espoused by the Ladies Repository in 1869 that “Bach’s music is like a primitive forest, full of


30“The Question is Settled!” Dwight’s Journal of Music 24/21 (7 January 1865), 376. It is possible that part of the motivation for the mocking stance adopted by the journal was to support the performer who was lambasted in the letter. As identified by the introduction to the Dwight’s Journal of Music collection, C. Jerome Hopkins, the performer in question, was also a contributing author to J. S. Dwight’s journal. He was identified in the journal by the pseudonym Timothy Trill. By describing the attack on Bach’s fugues as tilting against the windmill, the journal seemed to imply that the greater public had already embraced Bach’s music.

grotesque growths and gnarled branches. One should not send children into this wood.”

As late as 1879 the debate continued between an idealistic appreciation of Bach’s music and more practical attempts at integration into the church and concert hall. One article, subtitled “Bach-Biting,” encouraged the public to reconsider the composer. While the author praised the increasing autonomy of American audiences, establishing their own standards and listening with their own ears, he or she cautioned against the childish recklessness of dismissing venerable art such as that of Bach. The author advocated careful consideration before overlooking music that one might not immediately understand, particularly when other great musical minds regarded the music so highly. The author takes this concept further by suggesting, “even if he cannot personally enjoy Bach’s music in an aesthetic way, there is something in it which eludes his comprehension, and which is entitled to respect rather than easy-going contempt.”

Despite America’s continued cultural advancement and subsequent musical confidence, audiences could still be swayed by the suggestion that their disapproval risked seeming provincial and ignorant. While many audiences may not have found value in the music of Bach, they may have decided that preventing others from perceiving their seeming ignorance provided a compelling reason to support the composer’s music.

The resurgence of Bach’s music did not occur as one sweeping gesture across all of America. Even in the more musically cultivated Northeast, different cities identified with different musical aesthetics. While Philadelphia and New York encouraged the works of some new and less-known composers, Boston was comparatively more cultivated but also more musically conservative. This attitude was reinforced by the formation of ensembles such as the Handel and Haydn Society and by the writing and publication of individuals such as John Sullivan Dwight. Dwight’s zeal for the musical achievements of Germany met a favorable audience in Boston, but his specific advocacy of Bach’s compositions reached a much smaller following. An example of the supportive stance by Dwight’s Journal of Music towards J. S.

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32 Handel and Bach,” Dwight’s Journal of Music, 137.

Bach was its publication of Johann Nikolaus Forkel’s biography of Bach throughout the years 1855 and 1856.\textsuperscript{34} Although the journal was based in Boston, where local readers welcomed its ideals, its impact eventually reached much further. Dwight’s publications played a considerable role in bringing American audiences to Thomas’s performance of Bach.

Theodore Thomas was not the sole champion of Johann Sebastian Bach’s music to American audiences; other individuals, such as John Knowles Paine and John Sullivan Dwight, brought Bach to America through their own respective methods. Thomas’s impact across the nation was, however, more pronounced than that of any other musician within the orchestral concert tradition. Thomas’s performances reached audiences at an auspicious time in America’s cultural development and at a point when others were espousing the same musical ideals. Much of Thomas’s achievement owes to his own ingenuity and adept performance choices. Largely through Thomas’s efforts, the music of Sebastian Bach increased from a position of relative obscurity at the outset of Thomas’s professional life to nationwide acceptance well before the conductor’s career ended.

\textsuperscript{34}Edward N. Waters, “John Sullivan Dwight, First American Critic of Music,” \textit{The Musical Quarterly} 21/1 (1935), 84.
CHAPTER 4

THE 1902 PERFORMANCE OF BACH’S B-MINOR MASS

The impetus for the present study came from Rose Thomas’s memoirs of the 1902 Cincinnati Musical Festival. Her discussion included a detailed account of Thomas’s preparation of the B-minor Mass, which offers a great deal of information about Thomas’s general musical priorities and specific performance choices in preparing for this festival:

The most important classic work on the festival programmes of this year was Bach’s great B minor “Mass,” and to the preparation of this work Thomas gave two years of exhaustive study. The edition he used as the foundation of his work was that edited by Hermann Kretzmar [sic], in 1899, for the performances of the Riedelverein of Leipzig [sic]. With this as his basis, he proceeded first to prove every note of it, and then he added everything which it lacked, and corrected whatever his own researches had shown to be wrong. There was probably not a single authoritative work on Bach or his music, in either English, German, or French, which Thomas did not study in preparing this “Mass,” and the score in which the results of his labors were annotated is unique in the world, for it represents the consensus of the opinions of all the great Bach experts of both Europe and America. There was not a trill or turn in the entire work which he did not study separately, write out in full, nor an instrument indicated which was not faithfully employed, although some of them had to be made especially and learned by the orchestra. In only one particular did Thomas depart from the originals of the classic scores, and that was in the number of musicians used in the performances. In a hall of the size of the Cincinnati Music Hall, it was, of course, impossible to use the small orchestra of the classic writers. But to offset this Thomas balanced the various choirs of the orchestra in such a way as to give the same relative tone quality, using in the “Mass” an unheard-of number of woodwinds in proportion to the strings.¹

Although each piece performed at the Cincinnati Musical Festival presented its own challenges, the B-Minor Mass required the most adaptation for festival performance. As Rose Thomas’s stated, Thomas’s preparation of the Mass required extensive study. While it is possible that her description of “two years of exhaustive study” is exaggerated, as are many other sections of her hagiographic account, Thomas undoubtedly devoted considerable time to his

¹Rose Thomas, 497-98. Italics are in the original source.
preparation of the work. This dedication is evidenced by the many explicit markings and alterations to his score of the Mass.

Theodore Thomas programmed Bach’s B-minor Mass at the 1886, 1902, and 1904 festivals. His approach to each performance differed (the 1886 festival being particularly different from the later two), and each is worth its own investigation. The 1902 festival, however, provides the best glimpse into actual performance details. This is due in part to the extensive discussions of the 1902 performance by Rose Thomas, George P. Upton, and Charles Russell, but even more to Thomas’s own score of the Mass, preserved at the Newberry Library archives in Chicago.

Why the B-Minor Mass?

One of the motivating factors behind Thomas’s careful preparation of the B-Minor Mass was the conductor’s deep reverence for the composition. Thomas regarded all of J. S. Bach’s compositions highly. However, like other musicians of his time, he held the composer’s final large-scale choral work in special esteem. As the Bach revival intensified in Europe and America, two of the composer’s larger choral works, the B-minor Mass and St. Matthew Passion, received greater attention. These works appealed to the current musical taste for large proportions and grandeur. Performance reviews of the Mass frequently referred to the work as Bach’s greatest achievement. Although Thomas never expressed these sentiments explicitly in writing, his actions demonstrate a similar regard for the composition.

Bach’s B-Minor Mass is one of the few large choral works that received multiple performances under Thomas at the Cincinnati festivals. Although other large-scale choral works also received multiple performances, such as Handel’s Messiah, Bach’s own St. Matthew Passion, and Mendelssohn’s St. Paul and Elijah, study of the festival programs reveals that Thomas valued the B-Minor Mass more than any other choral work.  

2Rose Thomas, 496-501; Thomas, 1:211-12; Russell, 287-88.

3Thomas, 2: 156-82.
The first performance of the Mass at a Cincinnati Musical Festival occurred in 1886. The immense difficulty of the choral parts and length of the Mass may have been the reason that Thomas programmed only eleven selections from the Mass.\(^4\) He believed this performance to be the American premiere of any portion of the work. As with all his other performances, an opportunity to premiere any work served as a significant motivator for its inclusion in a program.\(^5\) The difficulty of performing the B-Minor Mass at the 1886 festival was not solely the result of the complexity of the work itself;\(^6\) instead, it was the magnitude of the entire festival, which included a performance of both Haydn’s *The Creation* and Berlioz’s *Damnation of Faust*, each chorally onerous.

Thomas’s decision to program the Mass again at the opening of the 1904 festival most clearly demonstrates his profound respect for the composition. During this period of his career Thomas’s main obligation was the conductorship of the concert season in Chicago, the residence of his orchestra for the past twelve years. This orchestra, however, did not yet have its performance hall and faced a bleak financial future. Additionally, Thomas’s health had begun to fail, and hearing loss threatened the continuation of his career. For these reasons Theodore Thomas programmed all of the works that he considered particularly great musical achievements during the 1903-04 season. Rose Thomas described the final list of programs as a résumé of

\(^{4}\) Johnson, 18.


Nevertheless, Thomas believed that he premiered the work, so a likely motivation for the performance in 1886, despite its incompleteness, was Thomas’s desire to premiere the composition.

\(^{6}\) J. Fred Wolle’s performance in 1900 of Bach’s Mass in B Minor (previously credited as the American premiere) demonstrates the difficulty of preparing this work. Wolle originally attempted to perform the B-Minor Mass in 1892 with the Bethlehem Choral Union. The difficulties faced by the ensemble, coupled with Wolle’s insistence that they succeed, ultimately led to the dissolution of the ensemble. It took the formation of a new ensemble, the Bethlehem Bach Choir, in 1899, and months of rehearsal for Wolle to lead a performance of the Mass on 27 March 1900. Clark, 345.
Thomas’s career. The aging conductor intended the Cincinnati Musical Festival to serve as the grand finale of this list. The compositions of Bach and Beethoven became bookends for the festival’s expansive finale. For the first concert of the festival, Thomas programmed Bach’s Suite no. 2 in B minor and the Mass in B minor. For the final concert he programmed Beethoven’s Missa solemnis and Symphony no. 9.

The choice to include the B-minor Mass in the 1904 festival is not significant solely because Thomas predicted, correctly, that the 1904 festival would be his last, but also because he chose to program the same large-scale choral work at two successive festivals. Although he often performed the same symphonies at consecutive festivals, Thomas made sure to space out the large choral works, often putting at least two festivals before any repeat performance. These works functioned as the anchor of each festival program and therefore could not be repeated frequently. Of the four previously mentioned choral works, the least amount of time (three festivals) elapsed between the first performance of Bach’s St. Matthew Passion, in 1882 and the second in 1890. Among the same four, the longest period of time (eight festivals) between performances elapsed in the case of Mendelssohn’s Elijah, performed first in 1875 and not again until 1894. Clearly, Thomas considered the B-minor Mass to be a significant part of his “résumé,” significant enough to warrant its inclusion in consecutive festivals.

Admittedly, there were obvious benefits to performing Bach’s Mass again at the 1904 festival. Thomas had worked exceptionally hard to prepare the B-minor Mass in 1902. When programming it again in 1904, he engaged many of the same choir members from the previous festival. These members could relearn the Mass quickly and thus alleviate the choir’s pressure-filled rehearsal schedule. One of Thomas’s main complaints about the festival chorus was that its constantly changing personnel prevented the ensemble from developing any repertoire. By performing the same work at consecutive festivals Thomas was able to program other significant and difficult works, such as the previously mentioned Missa solemnis and Symphony no. 9 by Beethoven, thus creating a convincing climax to his tenure with the Cincinnati Musical Festival.

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7Rose Thomas, 506.

8Thomas, 1: 82.
The Kretzschmar Edition

For the 1902 festival performance Thomas used Hermann Kretzschmar’s edition of Bach’s Mass in B minor. Because it was not the most widely accepted version of the Mass during the period in which Thomas performed the work, this edition brings with it certain questions. The edition most often used during this period was the 1857 publication by the Bach Gesellschaft.9 Kretzschmar’s edition, published in 1899 by Breitkopf & Härtel, was prepared for the performance of the Riedelverein of Leipzig.10 This edition contributed neither a fresh perspective from new sources, nor a different approach to the materials consulted for the preparation of the Bach Gesellschaft edition. Instead, Kretzschmar’s edition presented a more fully realized and performance-ready version of the Bach Gesellschaft score. Kretzschmar’s edition was not meant to replace the Bach Gesellschaft edition; Kretzschmar himself was a founding member of the organization.11 Rather, his edition responded to the nineteenth-century understanding of how to prepare a Baroque composition with a contemporary orchestra.

The Bach Gesellschaft version of this work reprinted exactly what were believed to be Bach’s original notation. As well, the editors refrained from including any extraneous markings to assist the contemporary performer. As a result, a significant aspect of the Bach Gesellschaft edition is that it provides only figured bass for the organ and calls for instruments that were

9Butt, 30.


obsolete by the nineteenth century. Kretzschmar’s edition adapted the Mass for modern performance. The most significant alteration is his inclusion of a fully realized figured bass part for the organ.

Thomas’s performance using Kretzschmar’s edition of the Mass was not, in the end, especially different from many of those performed from the Bach Gesellschaft edition. For example, when the Handel and Haydn Society performed portions of the B-minor Mass in 1887, they used the Bach Gesellschaft edition. However, Charles Perkins, the president of the Handel and Haydn Society, supplemented this edition with the English conductor Otto Goldschmidt’s additions to the score. Goldschmidt had led the first performance of the B-minor Mass in England in 1876 and had adapted the Mass to his orchestra. Perkins procured Goldschmidt’s emendations and additions while visiting England and incorporated all of them into the Handel and Haydn Society’s 1887 performance. According to Perkins’s description of Goldshmildt’s score, the only major difference between Goldschmidt’s edition and that of Kretzschmar is that Kretzschmar’s version was eventually published; both conductors realized the figured bass part for the organist, developed solutions for the difficult trumpet parts and obsolete instruments, and included expression markings.

While both Perkins and Thomas further adapted their respective versions of the score for their individual performances, it seems that Thomas scrutinized his score more carefully than did Perkins. Perkins’s level of adaptation and contemplation of the score is discussed in program notes from the Handel and Haydn Society performance. These notes explain that Perkins returned many instruments to their original sections, performing the oboe d’amore part on oboe instead of clarinet, the trumpet parts on trumpets instead of clarinet, and the corno da caccia part

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13 Perkins and Dwight, 479-82.

14 Ibid.
on French horn.\textsuperscript{15} The program notes do not mention any instance in which Perkins addressed the issue of ornamentation or alteration of Goldschmidt’s figured bass parts.

Program notes from Thomas’s festival performance include a separate notice from Thomas thanking Kretzschmar for his edition, an adaptation that Thomas remarked was produced in a highly scholarly and artistic manner. The organ part is specifically noted for making it possible to “maintain the original scoring and also the spirit of the master.”\textsuperscript{16} The idea that Thomas was able to maintain the original scoring is suspect, however, as will be demonstrated later. Rose Thomas correctly noted that Thomas proceeded first to proofread every note of the Mass and corrected whatever his own researches had shown to be wrong. To this end, Theodore Thomas’s score includes three kinds of markings: alterations to Kretzschmar’s added parts (often in the form of changes to the continuo part); performance practice markings, such as trills and other stylistic details; and alterations to better suit the Mass for the Cincinnati Music Hall, such as augmented trumpet parts.

Thomas’s markings in the score of the B-minor Mass are, in many ways, characteristic of Ezra Schabas’s description of Thomas’s approach to other scores. There are very few markings, such as cues, that would serve as performance reminders to the conductor.\textsuperscript{17} Instead, almost every mark seems to apply to his preparation for the performance. Throughout his career, Thomas rarely marked cues into his scores and, towards the end of his life, frequently conducted from memory.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{15}By doing this, Perkins demonstrated considerable confidence in the talent of his trumpet and horn players. These parts were extremely high and difficult to perform, as will be explained more thoroughly later.

\textsuperscript{16}Program of the Fifteenth Biennial Music Festival at Cincinnati, Cincinnati Musical Festival Association Records (1875-1962), preserved in the collection of the Cincinnati Historical Society, 55.

\textsuperscript{17}Thomas only marked one cue in the entire score. Twenty-three measures into the “Et incarnatus” he marked a canonic tenor entrance, probably because it is difficult in that passage to identify the entering voice type. Aside from that marking, the only recurring performance reminder is when Thomas needed to signal the chorus to stand for the next piece.

\textsuperscript{18}Schabas, 230.
In addition to including a fully realized figured bass part, Kretzschmar’s version of the Mass includes many stylistic recommendations. The articulations and slurs are kept the same as the Bach Gesellschaft, but Kretzschmar’s edition suggests tempi and expressive details where there previously had been none. To Kretzschmar’s credit, the tempo markings that deviate from the Bach Gesellschaft edition are identified by parentheses (see Table 4.2 on page 71), but the many expressive markings have no such indication. Because Thomas took great care to cross out any editorial marking that he did not use, it can be assumed that he applied all remaining editorial comments to his performance.

The 1902 Festival Orchestra

As with all of the Cincinnati Festivals, the size of the chorus did not vary between pieces. The same approximately five hundred voices that performed in Berlioz’s Requiem performed in the B-minor Mass. After the first festival in 1873, in which the chorus comprised eight hundred performers, Thomas managed to reduce the size of the ensemble. After reducing the chorus to between five hundred and six hundred members yearly, the only remaining option was to adapt the instrumental parts to the chorus. The minimum size of the orchestra employed for any piece rarely dropped beneath one hundred performers. At the 1902 festival, Thomas used 200 instrumentalists for Berlioz’s Requiem, 129 for Bach’s Mass, 93 for Beethoven’s Symphony no. 3, and 100 for Wagner’s Meistersinger prelude.\(^19\) The instrumentation for the Mass in B minor augmented every section, but this occurred most notably in the woodwinds (see Table 4.1).

\(^{19}\)Russell, 288.
Table 4.1. The instrumentation of the 1902 Cincinnati Musical Festival performance of Bach’s B-minor Mass

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<td>21 – Violin I</td>
<td>6 – Oboe II</td>
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<tr>
<td>19 – Violin II</td>
<td>2 – Oboe III</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 – Viola</td>
<td>2 – Clarinet in D</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 – Violoncello</td>
<td>4 – Clarinet in A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 – Double Bass</td>
<td>8 – Bassoon</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 – Flute I</td>
<td>2 – Horn</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 – Flute II</td>
<td>6 – Trumpet</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 – Oboe d’amore</td>
<td>2 – Timpani</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 – Oboe I</td>
<td>1 – Organ</td>
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**Period Instruments**

The inclusion of the oboe d’amore in the orchestra is perhaps the least expected aspect of this instrumentation. The performance tradition of this instrument had been particularly strong during the 1730s and 1740s, when Bach composed the B-minor Mass, but during the second half of the eighteenth century the oboe d’amore rapidly faded into obscurity. Programs from the 1902 festival performance boasted that these instruments had been made in Europe and America.

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20Rose Thomas, 499. Russell, 288. Thomas, 1: 212. Program of the Cincinnati May Music Festival: Fifteenth May Musical Festival, Cincinnati Musical Festival, Association Records (1875-1962), The Cincinnati Historical Society, 3. There is some discrepancy among sources regarding the total size of the orchestra. Rose Thomas’s memoirs list 131 total performers. Russell, however, lists 129 performers. Further confusing the issue, George Upton lists four first and four second flutes in Thomas’s autobiography. A program from the fifteenth festival explains the discrepancy between Rose Thomas’s and Russell’s total count. This program lists “two pairs kettledrums.” It seems probable that Rose Thomas mistook the 4 total timpani for the total number of timpani performers. There were only two timpanists performing the Mass in B minor with the orchestra in 1902.
specifically for this performance. This oboe, which sounds a minor third lower than the standard oboe, has a significant solo in the alto aria “Qui sedes.” Kretzschmar’s edition of the Mass indicates that the oboe d’amore is meant to play this passage but also concedes that it may be performed on the standard oboe. When the oboe d’amore returns in “Et in Spiritum,” Kretzschmar suggests the use of the clarinet in A, because it can match the tuning and register of the oboe d’amore.

The horn part presented an additional complication for nineteenth-century performance. In the “Quoniam,” the only section of the Mass that uses horn, the Bach Gesellschaft edition calls for corno da caccia. Kretzschmar’s edition indicates the use of a horn in D, but corno da caccia is parenthetically included beneath this indication. As well, this version includes an editorial comment that notes, “Even in the case of the greatest virtuosity of the players, on common horns (in D or G) the high figures in their part always sound pressed and strained. Bach’s corno da caccia was a little hunting horn (post horn). If one does not have such an instrument on hand, one would do best to give the horn part to a bass D-trumpet and in the few places that this cannot manage it, to change it, or to help out with the horn.”

Kretzschmar’s description of the horn parts for this movement creates undue confusion regarding the register of the instrument. He describes the corno da caccia as a little hunting horn, implying that it sounds higher than the horn in F, which was then the standard pitch in orchestral settings. Because the horn parts are in D this would suggest that the corno da caccia transposed up a major second. The D crook in “Quoniam,” however, actually transposed the pitch down a minor seventh; the same transposition

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21Program of the Fifteenth Biennial Music Festival at Cincinnati, 56.

22Bach/Kretzschmar, 98. “Oboe d’amore oder Oboe.”

23Ibid., 188. “Die Clarinetten sind nicht besonders gedruckt, sondern spielen, wenn nöthig aus den Stimmen der Oboi d’amore.

24Ibid., 105. “Auch bei der grössten Virtuosität des Spielers klingen die hohen Figuren dieser Partie auf gewöhnlichem Horn (in D oder G) immer gepresst und gequält. Bachs Corno da caccia war ein kleines Jagdhorn (Posthorn). Hat man ein solches Instrument nicht zur Hand, thut man am besten, die Hornpartie einer tiefen D-Trompete zu geben und die wenigen Stellen, die diese nicht geben kann, zu ändern, oder das Horn zu Hülfe zu nehmen.” Italics are in the original source.
of the suggested bass D-trumpet. It is unclear why Kretzschmar suggested the use of an instrument that also transposes down a minor seventh for a part that he apparently believed to transpose up a major second.

The horn parts in Bach’s Mass are not unplayable when correctly transposed. Although challenging, the music does not venture above a written A⁵ for a horn in F, a register well within the abilities of Thomas’s horn section. Regardless, it is difficult to determine with any certainty whether or not Thomas used only horn for his performance or supplemented the parts with bass trumpets. Thomas probably did not share Kretzschmar’s identification of the corno da caccia because the same program notes that boasted the use of oboe d’amore would surely have mentioned inclusion of a smaller horn. Although it cannot be confirmed, Thomas seems to have abstained from using trumpets to cover any section of the horn part. There are no indications in the meticulously marked score that any instruments shared the horn’s musical line at any point throughout the “Quoniam.”

The trumpet parts required the greatest amount of adaptation for Thomas’s performance. Similarly to the horn parts, the register of the trumpet parts was extremely high. The Baroque trumpet performed in a higher register to include more partials in the overtone series and allow for a more melodically fluid line. Thomas’s modern trumpeters could not perform comfortably in this register. For this reason, the alterations to this part are not solely for reasons related to balance. Instead, Thomas shifted the highest and thus most difficult parts to the clarinet, as evidenced by pages 61 and 79 of his score (see Examples 4.1 and 4.2).

In the first excerpt Thomas moved the highest trumpet part to the first and third clarinet (see Example 4.1b). The second clarinet and first trumpet take what was previously the second trumpet part, and the second trumpet plays most of the original third trumpet part. In this arrangement Thomas did not add any previously nonexistent musical material; all of the notes in his arrangement exist in some fashion in the Bach Gesellschaft edition. He showed no compunction, however, when splitting the musical line between different parts. For example, his second trumpet begins with the third trumpet line but ends on the second trumpet part. When the second trumpet line switches parts, the third trumpet picks up the original third trumpet part for the last two measures.
Example 4.1. “Et in terra pax,” mm. 173-76
a. Bach Gesellschaft edition

b. Thomas’s version (as transcribed from his score)
Example 4.2. “Gratias agimus,” mm. 31-38

a. Bach Gesellschaft edition

In the second excerpt (see Example 4.2b), Thomas seems to have considered the musical line of greater significance. This time, the line never splits between any parts. Instead, Thomas shifted the first trumpet part to the clarinets and the trumpets take the original second and third trumpet parts. This example demonstrates some insecurity on Thomas’s part over the final instrumentation. As evidenced by the *ad libitum* instruction for the third clarinet, it seems that Thomas was unsure how many clarinets would sound appropriate on this section in the performance hall. By splitting the second trumpet part, Thomas’s instrumentation uses six clarinets on the first trumpet part, three trumpets on the second, and three trumpets on the third. The decision to use clarinets to augment these parts may not have been solely an issue of register.
Example 4.2–continued

b. Thomas’s version (as transcribed from his score)

By combining the timbres of the clarinet and trumpet, Thomas created a mellower, muted tone that would more closely match the Baroque trumpet than would modern trumpets alone, however, there is no indication that Thomas was familiar with the timbre of the Baroque trumpet.
Heretofore all discussion has assumed that Theodore Thomas used trumpets in his performance, but it is possible that he may have used cornets. Both Rose Thomas and George P. Upton cite the use of cornets in the instrumentation, but this really only constitutes one source, because Rose Thomas’s information is drawn directly from George Upton’s instrumentation list.25 The conductor’s well documented disdain for the cornet as early as 1870 lends further credence to the argument that Thomas would have used trumpets. About his Summer Night series, Thomas once wrote, “At last the summer programmes show a respectable character, and we are rid of the cornet! Occasionally a whole symphony is given.”26 In 1898, however, the Boston Journal included in a listing of the Chicago Orchestra’s instrumentation two cornets and two trumpets, further confusing this issue.27 Perhaps Thomas did not hold an entirely inflexible prejudice against the instrument, or he may have kept two on the full orchestral roster in the event they were specifically requested in a composition. Reinforcing this latter point, this same listing also mentions four tubas in addition to the four horns, an uncommon instrument in most compositions.28 In regard to the timbre of the trumpet section in the 1902 performance, Thomas might have used cornets to give the section a rounder tone. This would have matched the clarinets well and more closely approximated the more homogenous sound of the Baroque trumpet. The most convincing argument for the case that Thomas used trumpets is his specific identification of the instrument in the score. Considering how meticulously he marked every aspect of his score, it is unlikely Thomas would have specified trumpets if he intended cornets.

In addition to Thomas’s alteration of the musical lines in these examples, he also included dynamic and stylistic markings. All of these markings in the augmented parts come from Kretzschmar’s editorial additions. The fact that Thomas bothered to transcribe them directly into

25Thomas, 1: 212. Rose Thomas, 499. Rose’s memoirs, which were written after Thomas’s autobiography, contain identical mistakes in the instrumentation list. Upton’s instrumentation list is for that of the “great D [sic] minor Mass.” Consequently, Rose Thomas’s listing of “The Bach orchestra” is for the “Mass in D minor.”

26Rose Thomas, 63-64. Italiccs are in the original source.

27Ibid., 477.

28Ibid.
the handwritten portions of the score suggests that he applied them to his performance. A few of these markings imbue the work with an overly romanticized quality. For example, in “Patrem omnipotentem” there are frequent subito f indications and the dynamic range moves from pp to ff in spans as short as eight measures. Most markings, however, are appropriate to the musical line. They often follow the contour of the melody or assist in bringing the moving line to the front of the orchestral texture. Rarely do the markings impose in a way that would be considered a compositional alteration of the musical material. Example 4.1b includes a ritardando added by Thomas in the penultimate measure of the work. One of the most consistent stylistic traits throughout Thomas’s score is the inclusion of a ritardando two measures before the end of most sections of the Mass. Although these ritardandos are well placed and musically appropriate, they also demonstrate the romanticized approach that Thomas sometimes used in his performances of the work.

Festival Performance Forces

By reducing the performing forces in the orchestral accompaniment during soloistic sections Kretzschmar had acknowledged in his edition that the nineteenth-century orchestra was undoubtedly larger than Bach’s orchestras. On page 48 of Kretzschmar’s score, in the middle of the “Gloria,” he recommends that the director should reduce the instrumental performers on each part by half.29 This reduction allows the melody in the first soprano line to carry more easily over the orchestral texture. While European choruses and orchestras had grown considerably since the Baroque period, American choral societies were even larger. Exemplifying the typically European choruses, when the Riedel’scher Verein performed the B-minor Mass in 1859, Karl Riedel directed approximately 250 voices. Otto Goldschmidt’s performance of the Mass in

29Bach/Kretzschmar, 48. “Anmerkung für den Dirigenten. Von + ab spielt in allen Instrumenten nur die Hälfte.”
1876 utilized a 160-voice choir, with 70 instrumentalists and an organ. By comparison, the choral ensembles of the Handel and Haydn Society and the Cincinnati Musical Festival easily doubled that of the Riedel’scher Verein and tripled Goldschmidt’s choir.

To compensate for the inordinately large size of his orchestra and chorus, Thomas further reduced the number of instrumental performers in sections of the Mass that feature soloists. These sections include the “Christe eleison,” “Laudamus,” “Qui sedes,” “Et in Spiritum,” “Benedictus,” and “Agnus Dei.” In the “Laudamus” Thomas specified 8 first violins, 8 second violins, 6 violas, 4 cellos, and 2 basses. Despite the fact that he made it easier for the vocal solos to carry over the orchestral accompaniment, these soloists nevertheless had to wrestle with the hall’s massive dimensions. To project to the back of this expansive hall, the four soloists, Marie Zimmerman, Gertrude May Stein, Ben Davies, and Andrew Black, had to use many of the same vocal techniques for Bach that they utilized with large Romantic works for full orchestra. Although these soloists were all known for their ecclesiastical singing, performing in prominent churches and participating in Bach and Handel festivals in Europe and the United States, many also sang in various opera companies. Andrew Black’s considerable reputation came from his portrayal of the Spectre in Dvořák’s The Spectre’s Bride. The Scottish baritone was also known for his performances of the lead role in Mendelssohn’s Elijah. The four soloists were all versatile enough to handle large orchestral performance forces; they all also sang roles in the festival performance of the first act of Wagner’s Der Meistersinger, and Ben Davies sang the solo tenor part in Berlioz’s Requiem.

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30Music in London: Bach’s B-Minor Mass,” Dwight’s Journal of Music, 36/4 (27 May 1876), 237 [originally published in the Musical Standard, 29 April]. Interestingly, a critic from Goldschmidt’s performance commented that the chorus could seldom be heard properly. This critic hoped that the balance issues would teach a lesson to all those conductors who cram music festivals with too much instrumental force.
Theodore Thomas used comparatively slower tempi for the 1902 performance than those marked in the Bach Gesellschaft score of the Mass (see Table 4.2). These tempi may have helped establish clarity in the large hall, where tones would resound for longer durations than in a smaller church or performance hall.

Table 4.2. Comparison of tempo and stylistic markings in the Mass in B Minor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of movement</th>
<th>Bach Gesellschaft</th>
<th>Kretzschmar</th>
<th>Thomas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kyrie eleison (1)</td>
<td>Adagio.</td>
<td></td>
<td>⌘ 63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christe eleison</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Larghetto)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrie eleison (2)</td>
<td>Alla breve.</td>
<td>(Moderato)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria in excelsis</td>
<td>Vivace.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laudamus te</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Andante Maestoso)</td>
<td>⌘ 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gratias agimus</td>
<td>Alla breve.</td>
<td>(Pietoso)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domine Deus</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Andante animato)</td>
<td>⌘ 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qui tollis</td>
<td>Lento.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qui sedes</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Allegro grandioso.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quoniam</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Andante pomposo.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cum Sancto Spiritu</td>
<td>Vivace.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

31 The *Andante Maestoso* indication is not in the Bach Gesellschaft edition, but Kretzschmar neglected to place this suggestion within parentheses. Thomas inserted parentheses himself, which suggests that he closely compared Kretzschmar’s edition with that of the Bach Gesellschaft.

32 Thomas marked through this tempo marking but did not insert his own.
Table 4.2–continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of movement</th>
<th>Bach Gesellschaft</th>
<th>Kretzschmar</th>
<th>Thomas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Credo [Symbolum Nicenum]</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Grave, molto espressivo)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrem omnipotentem</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Allegro.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Et in unum dominum</td>
<td>Andante.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Et incarnatus est</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Largo.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crucifixus</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Poco Adagio.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Et resurrexit</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Allegro, un poco maestoso.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Et in Spiritum Sanctum</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Allegretto grazioso.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confiteor</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Allegro molto moderato e solenne.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Et expecto resurrectionem</td>
<td>Vivace e Allegro.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Poco sostenuto.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleni sunt coeli</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Allegro maestoso.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osanna</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Poco vivace.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benedictus</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Larghetto.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnus Dei</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Largo.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dona nobis pacem</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Moderato pietoso.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kretzschmar did not insert any indications that contradicted those of the Bach Gesellschaft edition. Occasionally he offered additional information, such as suggesting *pietoso* and *moderato* in the movements indicated *alle breve*. As mentioned previously, Thomas made sure

\[\text{The Andante indication is scratched through in Thomas’s score. He also marked a 76 above the 63, but it is unclear if this is a different tempo indication or possibly a range of tempi. Interestingly, Thomas indicated his preferred tempo in German rather than in Italian. Although the conductor did not consistently use any one language when marking this score, he frequently included German and English in with the more traditional use of Italian.}

\[\text{Although the specification of an eighth note does not reveal the exact tempo, it may indicate that he intended the eighth note as the dominant pulse through the “Agnus Dei.”}\]
to indicate any instance in which he planned not to heed Kretzschmar’s indications. For this reason, it can be safely assumed that he intended to follow any undisturbed editorial indication. The few times that Thomas indicated an alternate tempo, it was usually slower than the previous suggestion. Also, Thomas noted in his score that the “Crucifixus,” written in a 3/2 meter, should be conducted in six beats to the measure. This is not the only time his markings suggest the subdivided beat as the main pulse. In “Et in unum dominum” the indication of the tempo with an eighth pulse and Langsam suggests a subdivided pulse. The lone eighth note before the common time “Agnus Dei” similarly implies that the conductor regarded the eighth note as the dominant pulse.

It is possible that Thomas conducted slower tempi for expressive reasons, although this is difficult to confirm. Based upon critical reviews throughout the conductor’s career, it seems that Thomas characteristically conducted faster tempi. Some critics criticized Thomas’s quick tempi in Beethoven symphonies,35 and at least one critic lambasted the conductor in 1876 for his “absurdly fast” tempo in the opening chorus of Bach’s Magnificat.36 As well, Thomas seems not to have been prone to the urge to use excessive tempo rubato for expressive purposes.37 This is not meant to imply that his performance of the B Minor Mass maintained a consistent tempo throughout each movement. As mentioned previously, nearly every movement of the Mass ended with a ritardando. In addition, when preparing the Mass for the 1904 festival, Thomas explained to his choir, “As I have remarked to you before, you must often allow time for expression marks, but immediately take up the tempo again. For the music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries you must allow time for ornamentation; since Beethoven, for expression.”38

35 Thomas, 1: 231.


37 Schabas, 224.

38 Thomas, 1: 234.
Bowings and Ornaments

In addition to using slower tempi to create clarity, Thomas also reorchestrated some sections of the Mass to achieve the same effect. In “Et resurrexit” he marked out the organ part through three measures of the opening rhythmic fanfare. The rhythmic interest in the orchestra’s ascending arpeggiated line would thus have sounded through more clearly. Thomas also used bowings to lighten the texture of the string section and direct the listener’s ear towards moving lines. Using uniform bowings, Thomas frequently had the strings lift off the downbeat of each measure. His bowings indicate in most places a light, unromantic conception of the phrase.39

39Rose Thomas, 451 and 478. Thomas believed that he was the first to introduce uniform bowings to the orchestra. Rose Thomas boasted, “Thomas was the first to introduce uniform bowing into the orchestra, and even as late as 1895 when we were in Europe, it was not in use in the great orchestras of London, Paris, and Berlin which we heard. Regardless of his order in this process, it was not common to see uniform bowings at the end of the nineteenth century. About a Boston performance a critic remarked, “The uniformity of bowing is a delight to the eye.”

There is historical evidence of uniform bowing well before Thomas employed the technique with his orchestra. Even some of the earliest orchestral ensembles, such as the Mannheim orchestra under Johann Stamitz used uniform bowings. It is possible, however, that Thomas used this technique during a period when few other orchestras did. Roland Würtz and Eugene K. Wolf, “Mannheim, 2. 1743-1800,” in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 2d ed., edited by Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 2001), 15: 771-74.

While describing the conducting practices of Hans Richter (1843-1916), Elliott Galkin addresses the issue of uniform bowing technique in the nineteenth century. Galkin first quotes a journal entry from Theodore Thomas’s second European trip, in which Thomas wrote about Richter’s conducting of the London Symphony Orchestra, “It appears to me as if he himself had never played a stringed instrument, for the string choir of his orchestra played as it would, without attracting his attention. No two of the violinists bowed alike.” Despite Thomas’s account, Galkin suggests that Richter used uniform bowings, because “(1) he was a violinist; and (2) coordinated bowing had been practiced by orchestras for about a century.” To demonstrate this point of continued practice Galkin first identifies uniform bowings in the Mannheim orchestra in 1783 and then confirms their use in the Orchestre de la Société du Conservatoire in Paris in 1838. The rationale is that many of the violin-bow leaders traveled throughout Europe, including Wilhelm Cramer’s (1746-1799) travels to London, incorporating the Mannheim bowing practices into their later positions. The fact that Thomas’s observation was made in 1880, and that the nearest example of uniform bowings found by Galkin was from 1838 (when Thomas was three years old), does little to reinforce the suggestion of continuous practice throughout the nineteenth century. Rose Thomas, 179-181; Elliott W. Galkin, A History of Orchestral Conducting: in Theory and Practice (New York: Pendragon, 1988), 616-17.
Thomas demonstrates this method of bowing in the “Gloria in excelsis” (see Figure 4.1) in this quick-tempo movement, indicated vivace, he helps create a lilting sensation in 3/8, with one pulse to each measure, by bowing away from the bar line. Thomas also adjusts the bowings to allow moving lines in other instruments to more easily carry over the sustained pitches. By using a down bow for most sustained notes, the natural inclination is to decrescendo through the note. Thomas even indicated a down bow on sustained notes in the first violin in measures 35, 39, and 51, where Kretzschmar had instead suggested a crescendo. Kretzschmar’s indications follow the musical phrase through the intensifying sequence, however, Thomas’s markings suggest other concerns. The reverberation in the hall and size of Thomas’s orchestra posed significant challenges to the ensemble’s clarity. By using these bowings, Thomas helped direct the listener to the arpeggiated sixteenth-lines in the other instruments. Conversely, Thomas used an up bow through the slurred passage in measure 43 of the first violin part to make the sixteenths more prominent. Admittedly, he used a down bow in a similar passage of the first violin part in measure 63, although there are other reasons for this decision. By using a down bow in this measure, the bowings of the first and second violin parts line up. The conductor almost always tried to use the same bowing for different sections if they were playing similar material. As well, this allows Thomas to end with an up bow in measure 66, a more musically appropriate conclusion to the unfinished phrase.

Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell point out that British concert goers in the 1920s and 1930s were astonished by the uniform bowings of the visiting Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics. Additionally, they reference the Violinschule, written between 1902 and 1905 by J. Joachim and A. Moser, in which the authors advocate that the beautiful illusion of a united legato is best achieved by allowing each player a certain licence in regard to bowing during delicate passages. Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell, The Historical Performance of Music: An Introduction (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 145.

Clearly, there was no uniform practice regarding orchestral bowings in the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century.
Figure 4.1. “Gloria,” mm. 29-78, showing Thomas’s bowing indications

a. Pg. 38, mm. 29-38

b. Pg. 39, mm. 39-48
Figure 4.1–continued

c. Pg. 40, mm. 49-58

d. Pg. 41, mm. 59-68
Figure 4.1–concluded

e. Pg. 42, mm. 69-78
The trills Thomas added throughout the score offer further clarification of the tempo ranges he employed. In the “Kyrie eleison” that opens the Mass, Thomas clearly indicated the specific trill that he wanted from the flute and oboe d’amore (see Example 4.3).

Example 4.3. “Kyrie eleison,” mm. 29-30

a. Kretzschmar’s edition

![Flute I.](image)

b. Thomas’s version

![Flute I.](image)

In order for this trill to speak clearly and not sound compressed with the number of turns indicated, the tempo of this movement could not possibly be faster than the indicated *adagio*. Thomas’s trill in “Qui tollis” (see Examples 4.4, 4.5) also reaffirms the slow *lento* tempo indicated in the Bach Gesellschaft edition. Again, the conductor expects such a busy trill that a true *lento* tempo is a necessity.
Example 4.4. “Qui tollis,” m. 27

a. Kretzschmar’s edition

b. Thomas’s version

Example 4.5. “Qui tollis,” mm.40-42

a. Kretzschmar’s edition

b. Thomas’s version

When using these examples to determine the tempo of the movement, one must consider that Thomas characteristically allowed for some *rubato* during these ornamentations.
Thomas’s markings on page 97 of the score are significant because they are the only ink markings on the actual score. On this page, Thomas initially inked his desired trills in the margins, later replacing them with different trills marked in pencil. The inked indications were crossed out in pencil, presumably the same one that he used to write the new trills. Aside from this page, the only time that Thomas used ink was on the trumpet and clarinet inserts pasted to the top of several pages of the score. These inserts also have pencil markings, such as rehearsal numbers, added at a later date. The significance of these markings is that they show some of the chronology of Thomas’s score study. It seems the conductor first tackled the well documented issues with the trumpet parts, problems confronted by both Otto Goldschmidt and Charles Perkins. Thomas may have written these early trill markings during the same period of study as when he wrote his augmented parts, although it is not clear why he would have begun marking trills in the middle of the work rather than starting at the beginning. In any event, this is the only instance in which Thomas changed his opinion about the performance of the trill. Despite their lack of clarity, initial ink markings, such as those from the same measure of “Qui tollis,” indicate he originally planned to have the flutist approach the trill from above (see Example 4.6).

Example 4.6. “Qui tollis,” m. 41, Thomas’s inked marking (as transcribed from his score)

In addition to beginning the penciled trill on the written note, Thomas removed the three-note descending passage at the end of the trill. Thomas’s first attempt with the trill bears some similarities to C. P. E. Bach’s ornamentation instructions, but this attempt is markedly different from the conductor’s later choices.40 It is possible that, when developing the second version of

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his trills, Thomas consulted the suggestions of the nineteenth-century English scholar Edward Dannreuther, in *Musical Ornamentation*.\(^4\) This possibility is reinforced by trills on other pages, which closely adhere to Dannreuther’s musical conclusions. With many dotted trills throughout the Mass, Thomas used the following method, an approach rhythmically identical to similar trills in Dannreuther’s text (see Example 4.7).\(^5\)

**Example 4.7. “Gloria in excelsis,” mm. 24-25**

a. Kretzschmar’s edition

![Flute II](image)

b. Thomas’s version

![Violin I](image)

The nineteenth-century American theorist Bernhard Ziehn wrote about Thomas’s interpretations, “... the Chicago Orchestra, under the direction of Theodore Thomas, has been the only orchestra in this, as well as foreign countries, which executes the ornaments of classic compositions correctly as explained by Quantz, Leopold Mozart, C. Ph. Em. Bach, and others,

\(^4\)Edward Dannreuther, *Musical Ornamentation* (New York: H. W. Gray, 1893-95), 167. Dannreuther spent his childhood in the German community in Cincinnati, a connection that lends credence to the possibility of Thomas’s having consulted this source.

\(^5\)Ibid., 166.
and before that time there was none since the classical era." Thomas had even performed works by C. P. E. Bach and Johann Joachim Quantz at other points in his career. Although in this case he seems to have used an intermediary source, the ornamentations throughout the B-minor Mass are carefully contemplated and demonstrate both awareness of the position in the musical phrase and concern for the activity of the other musical lines. To this end, Thomas’s trills are often more complex, incorporating turns and other ornamentations, when performed by only one or two instruments. When an entire section of instruments performs a trill, the ornament is often more pragmatic. In movements such as “Christe eleison,” which feature a solo instrument, Thomas’s trills become very complex. His ornamentations also allow for other musical lines to come through. In “Domine Deus” he decreased the musical interest at the end of the soprano’s trill so that the tenor’s trill is more apparent (see Example 4.8).

Example 4.8. “Domine Deus,” m. 59

a. Kretzschmar’s edition

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43 Thomas, 1: 229.

44 Schabas, 171.
Example 4.8–continued

b. Thomas’s version

Because the soprano’s trill does not continue through the last eighth note, her musical line does not impinge upon the tenor’s brief ornament.

Omissions

While Thomas did not omit many significant sections to the Mass, he did cut measures 42 through 71 of the first “Kyrie eleison.” The conductor made no note of his reasons for this omission. As well, Thomas followed Kretzschmar’s decision not to perform the “Osanna” twice. While the Bach Gesellschaft edition clearly indicates for the conductor to repeat the “Osanna” after the “Benedictus” (indicated in this edition as Osanna da Capo), Kretzschmar apparently decided that this made the work too long. Instead, his edition instructs the conductor to follow the “Sanctus” with the “Benedictus,” then flip back to the “Osanna,” and finally skip forward to the “Agnus Dei.” By rearranging the movements in this order, Kretzschmar’s edition maintains the more important second performance of the “Osanna,” which properly prepares the “Agnus Dei.” These instructions seem quite inefficient, when Kretzschmar could have simply placed the movements in his preferred order, but they are written this way because he wanted to indicate that the reordering was his decision and not that of the Bach Gesellschaft edition. Because Thomas added large, pencil reiterations of Kretzschmar’s markings to his score, it is clear that he applied Kretzschmar’s ordering to his performance.
Understanding Thomas’s Alterations in Historical Context

Thomas’s additions and emendations to his score are more curious when examined in the context of a passage from his autobiography. In the “Reminiscence and Appreciation” section of the book, written by the Chicago critic George P. Upton, Thomas’s preparations of the B-minor Mass are discussed.\(^{45}\)

He [Thomas] was always a great student of Bach. In his earlier years his aim was to adapt Bach to the modern orchestra, but during the last few years of his life he returned to the old forms by adapting the modern orchestra to Bach, and by making a most careful study and reproduction of the classical ornaments. This was evidenced in his arrangement of the Passion Music, and especially in the great D minor Mass [sic], in which he restored the balance of the Bach orchestra and its quality of tone. . . . His markings and additions to the score are extremely interesting, and, although numerous, he has not once violated the Bach spirit. On the other hand, he produced this mass as nearly as possible as Bach produced it. It was his purpose, and had he lived longer he would have carried it out, to give Bach’s music with a Bach orchestra, Mozart’s with a Mozart orchestra, and the same with that of Beethoven, Wagner, Strauss, and other composers.

Upton’s comments initially seem to misrepresent the case, but they make more sense with a thorough understanding of Thomas’s position at the festival. Thomas had to work under the constraints of the hall’s immense size and the proportions of the chorus. Had he concluded that he could not adapt Bach’s Mass to this situation, he would not have been able to perform the work. Although the conductor augmented the instrumentation, included new instruments, and rewrote the trumpet parts, neither he nor his audience considered this deviating from Bach’s spirit. Thomas did not rewrite any musical material that he would have considered a compositional alteration; his dynamic additions were meant to follow the implied musical contour, and his augmented parts adapted the music to the hall’s dimensions.

Theodore Thomas was well aware that his country’s performance venues dwarfed those used by Baroque and Classic period composers. In his autobiography, he advocated the creation of a musical museum: a place in which period instruments, used in ensembles of correct

\(^{45}\)Thomas, 1: 211-12.
proportions, would perform these works in accurately reproduced performance conditions.\textsuperscript{46} Beyond hypothetical situations, Thomas incorporated this concept into Chicago’s Orchestra Hall. In addition to the building’s main hall, there is also a smaller performance room appropriate for performance of Baroque and Classic period works with an appropriately sized ensemble.\textsuperscript{47}

Rose Thomas quoted her husband from this period of his life as having said, “I have at last come to the conclusion that no one has a right to alter, in any particular, the work of a composer. It is the duty of the executant musician to interpret a work exactly as the composer intended that it should be interpreted, and he should not change or embellish it to suit the taste of another generation.”\textsuperscript{48} In this context “alteration” carried a connotation different from its current meaning. In his 1902 performance of Bach’s Mass in B Minor, he adapted the work as best possible to its new venue, making changes only for this purpose. With the exception of the twenty-nine-measure cut in the “Kyrie,” Thomas made no alterations merely to suit his own aesthetic preference. In this performance the conductor believed that he was presenting the work in the manner Bach would have used, had he faced a similar situation.

\textsuperscript{46} Thomas, 2: 32.

\textsuperscript{47} Rose Thomas, 529.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 497.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Theodore Thomas was not born to a privileged life. Unlike many prominent American musicians during this period, Thomas did not receive a musical education in any of Europe’s cultural centers. Instead, he was born to a working-class family and, from an early age, earned his own living as a musician. Thomas received a practical musical education, learning from European immigrant musicians. The most important life lesson within all of these experiences was that he could not survive as a musician in America without a paying audience. Prominent failures throughout Thomas’s life, such as the American Opera Company and the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, made the conductor supremely aware of the importance of this lesson. Additionally, these failures taught him a great deal about the economic side musical performance. While Ezra Schabas’s biography, *Theodore Thomas: America’s Conductor and Builder of Orchestras*, likens the conductor to a musical missionary, Thomas’s career is better described as that of an orchestral salesman. Theodore Thomas believed in the value of his product, and he believed that if he presented it in a way in which the American audience could understand it, they would also value it. To this end, throughout his career he balanced the often conflicting demands of his own highly idealistic musical agenda and the expectations of his audiences.

Through his lifelong efforts Thomas brought American audiences closer to his musical ideals. Although programs from his concerts each year demonstrated that audiences continually shifted towards Thomas’s priorities, there were some principles that remained permanently ingrained in the American musical aesthetic. Most prominent among these was a fascination with grandeur. Period advertisements and music reviews consistently demonstrated the nineteenth-century American appreciation of the grand spectacle. In addition to aesthetics, capitalist economics drove the musical tendency towards large performance forces. Reliance on ticket sales made the size of the audience a significant factor. Maintenance of a performance series required massive audience turnout and consequently a venue that could seat large crowds.
As a result, concert halls often took on the proportions of exposition centers, seating thousands of people.

One important way in which Thomas impacted the musical culture of America was through his influence upon the American orchestral canon. This influence ranged from his advocacy of controversial contemporary composers such as Richard Wagner and Franz Liszt to lesser known earlier composers such as Johann Joachim Quantz and Johann Sebastian Bach. To be sure, Thomas was not alone in his efforts to further Bach’s music. Others such as John Knowles Paine and John Sullivan Dwight championed the composer’s music through their own methods of musical influence.

Although Thomas’s programs often challenged his audiences’ previous preferences in orchestral music, Thomas repeatedly demonstrated he was well aware of the concerns of his audience. He knew well the limits to which he could stretch their musical boundaries. Through this process Thomas’s personal advocacies became apparent. The conductor seldom programmed a concert without balancing works he valued with compositions the audience already favored. Through his orchestra’s wide geographic exposure and national prestige, and his own unwavering ideals, Thomas exerted great influence in America, furthering the cultivation of an audience for the music of Bach, Wagner, and others.

America presented a musical environment very different from that of Europe. Adaptation of European masterworks to both American venues and audiences required a penetrating understanding of the country’s society and culture. For this reason Theodore Thomas was an ideal candidate to introduce these works to America. Thomas’s “sales” approach to orchestral music created what might now seem odd combinations of musical priorities. These were perhaps most evident in the 1902 Cincinnati Musical Festival performance of Bach’s Mass in B minor, to which he devoted two years of study and preparation. Thomas harbored deep reverence for this work, as evidenced by his choice to perform the work again at the 1904 festival. In many ways he attempted to bring the Midwestern audience a thoroughly accurate reproduction of the B-minor Mass: he carefully researched proper stylistic ornamentation, utilized some period instruments, and researched the proper realization of figured bass. Yet Thomas also remained to the end of his life bound to the musical tastes of his audience. To this end, the 1902 performance
accommodated the musical requirements of any Cincinnati Musical Festival performance, namely that the work had to performed in the Cincinnati Musical Hall with the festival choir. Estimates of the total capacity of this massive hall ranged as high as 7,000, placing the size of this hall well beyond that of Baroque performance spaces, and Thomas knew this. Nevertheless, the hall was the musical pride of Cincinnati, and he knew that he had to adapt the work to the constraints of this venue if he wanted to perform the Mass at this festival. Ultimately, the festival choir numbered between five and six hundred members, accompanied by a 129-piece orchestra. Adaptation of this work required more than just augmentation of the performance forces; Thomas also struggled to accommodate registral issues and to reproduce the timbres of antiquated instruments.

The final product presented by Thomas to Cincinnati audiences was profoundly different from the original conception of Bach’s Mass not only in its milieu and social function but also in its sound. Markings throughout his score confirm that the conductor carefully considered how best to present this music, and, although this performance presented an entirely new conception of the work, it met with great success. Thomas’s approach to the American festival orchestra and particularly to the music of J. S. Bach carried significant implications for later treatments of the composer’s music. By accommodating a specific musical environment, Theodore Thomas created a new performance tradition, one that responded to the American aesthetic in a way that only an American could.
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**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

The completion of this thesis marks the culmination of Paul Luongo’s master’s studies in historical musicology at Florida State University. While pursuing this degree Paul also earned his masters in orchestral conducting. Before attending Florida State, he received his bachelor’s degree in music education from Stetson University in DeLand, Florida. During his master’s studies, Paul served as assistant conductor for the University Philharmonia Orchestra and the University Symphony Orchestra, conducting works such as Prokofiev’s Piano Concerto no. 3 and Debussy’s *Petite Suite*. In the Fall semester of 2006 Paul continues his graduate studies at Florida State University, beginning doctoral work in historical musicology. While completing these studies, he will teach courses in music history and music literature. In September 2006 Paul presents his paper “*Hamlet*: Clarification Through Liszt’s own Letters” at the National Conference of the College Music Society. In addition to writing program notes for the university orchestras, he also writes notes for the Amelia Island Chamber Music Festival. Paul plans to continue his research of Theodore Thomas and the orchestra in nineteenth-century America.