

Performance in Theory and in Practice:

Helmuth Rilling's Interpretations of Bach's B minor Mass¹

Uri Golomb

Abstract

The conductor Helmuth Rilling documented his views on Bach's B minor Mass in two different media: in addition to his three recordings, he wrote a monograph on this work, containing detailed analyses and performance instructions for each movement. Surprisingly, the recording that seems most consistent with the conductor's verbally-stated views is his 1999 version – the one most chronologically distant from the book.

In the book, Rilling repeatedly exhorts performers to trace the ebb-and-flow of tension within the music. His earlier performances, however, often display an internal rigidity which belies this ideal. This disparity might represent a tension between Rilling's aesthetics and his adoption, in the 1960s and 1970s, of a performance style better-suited for the projection of strict Unity of Affect, reflecting the influence of several of Rilling's mentors and erstwhile colleagues. In subsequent years, Rilling and his ensembles have gradually adopted a more locally flexible performance style, reflecting, in part, the influence of period-instrument performances.

The comparison between the book and the recordings provides a fascinating case study on the relationship between a performer's statements and practices; it also provides insights into how the ostensibly anti-Romantic influence of historical performance has increased the expressive options for Bach performance.

The conductor and scholar Helmuth Rilling, one of the most prominent interpreters of Bach's music in the 20th (and early 21st) century, provided posterity with several interpretations of Bach's B-minor Mass, BWV 232, in two distinct media. As a conductor, he made three commercial recordings of the work – in 1977, 1988 and 1999.² As a writer, he published an extensive monograph on the work in 1979, revising it for translation in 1984 and again for a second German edition in 1986.

In his monograph, Rilling seems to separate his discussion of the music from discussion of performance-related issues: he presents a detailed analysis of each movement, followed by recommendations for performance printed in *italicised* font.³ In the introduction to the book, however, Rilling makes it clear that the italicised sections do not spell out all the performative implications of his analyses.⁴ Instead, they “address only the basic elements of these implications, and not their details” (Rilling 1984: x). Thus, his recommendations for performance are not presented as self-sufficient; they should be read in conjunction with the analyses that precede them, and these analyses should have a bearing on the performance beyond what Rilling explicitly states in the italicised sections.

Partly for this reason, Rilling's analyses largely ignore “aspects of the work that seem to me to have no bearing on the architectural and structural elements of the piece, or to be of little importance in that regard (number symbolism, for example)” (Rilling 1984: x). In reality, Rilling's analyses also contain extensive references to the expressive affect of each movement – arguably an issue of no direct **structural** relevance. But structure and affect alike have clearer performative implications than number symbolism. On one of the rare occasions where his analysis does refer to number symbolism, he states that such symbols “do not

contribute to an understanding of the performance of the movement, and thus will not be discussed further here” (the quotation is from Rilling’s analysis of the *Sanctus*; *ibid*: 117).

On the whole, then, the monograph is clearly performance-oriented, and based on what I shall term an x/x philosophy of musical performance (see explanation in note 5 below): the belief that performances should realise the performer’s understanding of the musical work – be it in terms of structure, texture, thematic materials, harmonic tension and resolution, or expressive affect.⁵

It should be noted that Rilling’s approach is x/x – not +/+ : he advocates a more “objective” approach in movements which he perceives as less expressive (primarily the *Gratias* and the *Credo in unum deum*; Rilling 1984: 27-29, 53-55). In the *Qui tollis* and *Agnus dei*, he recommends performative restraint to match these movements’ meditative character (*ibid*: 34-38, 145-149). Overall, however, Rilling views the Mass as a richly expressive work. He observes notable contrasts between its movements, and while he perceives most movements in terms of unity of affect, he also discerns dramatic tensions and architectural developments within them. These observations are usually reflected in his recommendations for performance.

Rilling’s three commercial recordings of the Mass trace a remarkable transformation in his performance style. This transformation is consistent with the developments documented in his many recordings of Bach’s other works, as well as with broader developments in 20th-century Bach performance and reception. Comparison with his book reveals a complex and intriguing relationship between Rilling’s verbally-expressed views on the one hand and his practical choices as a musician on the other.⁶ Rilling’s interpretations of the Mass can therefore shed light on two different yet related issues:

1. The relationship between performers' verbally-expressed views on music and performance and their actual performance. In what sense can we view a performance as compatible (or incompatible) with the performers' statements? What significance can we attach to this compatibility (or lack thereof)? This can be seen as a subset of a more general issue: the relationship between verbal discourse on music and the choices of performing musicians.
2. Major developments in Bach performance in the 20th century, as documented in sound recordings. Rilling's case is particularly useful for elucidating two issues: the interaction between historically-informed performance (hence: HIP) and "mainstream", modern-instrument performance; and the question of expressiveness in Bach performance. These issues are related, given the frequent allegation that HIP musicians have advocated and/or practiced a deliberately dry, inexpressive performance style – and the contradictory belief that HIP has rejuvenated long-neglected techniques and aesthetic ideals of expressive performance. This, in turn, can be related to the wider question of what constitutes expression in musical performance.

In this paper, I will focus on the first issue. Alfred Brendel, introducing his own essays on music and its performance, claimed that the main reason for a performer to write down his views on music is

to clarify his own thoughts and articulate his perception for his own benefit. When advice is given it is aimed first and foremost at himself,

if not without the hope that it may be of some value to others. (Brendel 2001: xiii)

As an experienced and dedicated teacher of choral conducting, Helmuth Rilling clearly expected his book to be of value to his colleagues and students. In this paper, however, I shall treat it as a formulation of the conductor's advice to himself. My main questions will therefore be: a) what sort of advice did Rilling give himself; and b) to what extent, and in what ways, did he follow his own advice in each of his recordings. As I will try to demonstrate, the recording that matches the book most closely is – contrary to expectations – the one which is chronologically most distant from it. In attempting to explain why this happened, I will touch upon the second set of issues (developments in Bach performance and their relation to performative expression).

Helmuth Rilling and 20th-century Bach performance

Helmuth Rilling is one of the most prolific Bach conductors on record. In the 1960s, he recorded Bach's motets and several of his sacred and secular cantatas; between 1970 and 1984, he recorded Bach's complete sacred cantatas, as well as the Passions, Oratorios, and B-minor Mass. More recently, the Stuttgart Bachakademie, which Rilling founded in 1981, collaborated with the record company Hänssler Classic to produce the *Edition Bachakademie* – a recording of Bach's complete works, issued to celebrate the 250th anniversary of Bach's death in 2000. All the choral and orchestral works in this series are conducted by Rilling himself. The volumes dedicated to the sacred cantatas consist of a re-issue of the 1970-1984 cycle. Most of the other works, however, were recorded for the *Edition Bachakademie* during the 1990s. Rilling also

took part in selecting the musicians who recorded the chamber and solo works, many of whom appeared in concerts organised in Stuttgart Bachakademie.

Thus, through several decades, Rilling has been one of the most celebrated and influential interpreters of Bach's music (and especially of his sacred vocal music) – primarily as a conductor, but also as a teacher (directing workshops and master-classes on Bach performance), writer and lecturer. He remains active on all these fronts. His discography presents a rich documentation, covering over forty years with many repeat performances of the same repertoire, allowing us to trace the development of his performance style.

In his classification of the “spectrum of Bach interpretation” – i.e., the range of ensembles and approaches to Bach's liturgical vocal music – Rilling cites three main trends: the symphonic tradition, historical performance, and “church choirs, and congregational instrumental ensembles, primarily in Protestant (Lutheran) churches” (Rilling 1985: 4). Rilling belongs to the third of these traditions, having served as the Cantor of the Gedächtniskirche in Stuttgart from 1957 to 1988. His direct links with the church contributed both to his prestige and to his outlook. Since Bach himself was a Lutheran, and, for a significant part of his life, director of music at Lutheran churches, some present-day directors of similar institutions believe they have a unique intuitive grasp of the message he sought to communicate (Baumgartner 1999: 15-19). While Rilling has not made these claims for himself, he did state that **listeners** who share Bach's Lutheran background and beliefs are at a distinct advantage in understanding his church music – and, by implication, his musical legacy as a whole (Rilling 1985: 7-9, 15).

Rilling's two main ensembles – the Gächinger Kantorei (founded in 1954) and the Bach-Collegium Stuttgart (founded in 1965) – represent the

German *Kantorei* tradition: mixed chamber choruses, usually linked to the church, most often accompanied by chamber ensembles; while continuing to use modern instruments, these ensembles do aspire to take historical performance-practice research into account. Wilhelm Ehmann (1961: 7-8), himself part of this tradition, traces the origins of these ensembles to the *Jugendbewegung* of the 1920s and 1930s. Hans Grischkat, Rilling's teacher and a prominent Bach performers and scholar in his own right, was closely associated with this movement (Leitner 2000). The *Jugendbewegung* placed a premium on the participatory aspect of musical performance, sometimes rejecting professionalism altogether, and expressing a preference for simple, direct music (Potter 1998: 8). It embraced Bach as a didactic composer, and explained away polyphony as a symbol of social integration. Its attitude to expression approached -/-, praising Bach's music for its detachment and avoidance of individualism (Hiemke 2000: 75-83). This philosophy is mostly associated with the first half of the 20th century, especially the 1930s and 1940s. Much of it is clearly inapplicable to Rilling, who insists on high professional standards. However, the *Jugendbewegung*'s austere, -/- view converged on other prominent Bach images – not least the image promoted by the Leipzig School, with which Rilling is closely connected.

For the purposes of this paper, the Leipzig or Saxon school is defined as the circle of performers associated with the Thomanerchor in Leipzig (directed by Karl Straube, 1918-1940; Günther Ramin, 1940-1956; Kurt Thomas, 1956-1960; Erhard Mauersberger, 1961-1971) and the Kreuzchor in Dresden (directed by Rudolf Mauersberger, 1931-1971),⁷ and scholars associated with them (notably Arnold Schering and Wilibald Gurlitt). These musicians' approaches to Bach covered the x/- spectrum; even those of them who believed that Bach's music is richly expressive advocated a restrained, austere style of performance.⁸ This

strict x/- approach was particularly linked with the East German tradition, and connected with their advocacy of the boys' choir as an ideal medium for Protestant church music generally, and Bach's in particular.

Rilling has explicitly rejected this argument, expressing instead a strong preference for mixed choirs, and an even stronger preference for female soloists – over boys and counter-tenors alike – for reasons of vocal security and musical experience alike (Rilling 1985: 11-12). More importantly, Rilling's own philosophy has always been x/x: the performer's aim, in his view, is to decipher, "through analysis and reflection", the message that the composer sought to convey to his own audience, and then to create a performance that would make that message "emotionally relevant and timely" for present-day listeners (ibid: 13). This x/x approach also applies to structure and texture. Rilling believes it is important to project both "the organization of details and the differentiation of small forms" and "the architecture of large-scale movements" (ibid: 10). In texture, x/x translates into a strong demand for clarity (ibid: 10-11). Rilling therefore prefers reliably even tone production, which enables the achievement of equal intensity, and in which various strands can be heard without having to fight for prominence.

Nonetheless, Rilling has often expressed his admiration for the Leipzig school, and throughout his career has maintained close contact with the leading musicians there. This connection was further strengthened during his tenure as deputy chairman (1978-1990) and first chairman (1990-1996) of the Neue Bachgesellschaft. More importantly, Rilling has accepted, in theory, several of their stylistic prescriptions – most notably the notion that terraced dynamics (the direct switch from *forte* to *piano*, as opposed to the use of *crescendi* and *diminuendi*) are the

most appropriate method of dynamic change in Bach's music (Rilling, in interview with the author, December 2002).

Rilling also maintains, however, an open-minded approach to various performance schools. His studies of orchestral conducting link him to the more conventional symphonic establishment (including a 1967 master-class with Leonard Bernstein), as does his wide repertoire. In his 1984 lecture "Bach's significance" (translated and published as Rilling 1985), he is mostly critical of contemporaneous HIP performances. However, it should be noted that his approach has changed in subsequent years. Among other things, he now invites HIP musicians to appear at the Stuttgart Bachakademie's events. His programming philosophy is clearly reflected in the *Edition Bachakademie*. For example, he invited the Robert Levin to record the "English" Suites on a modern piano; the keyboard concerti on a harpsichord, accompanied by the "modern" instruments of the Oregon Bach Festival Orchestra under Rilling's direction; and *Das wohltemperierte Klavier* on a range of historical instruments.

Although Rilling has denied being directly influenced by HIP musicians, he has conceded the influence of performance practice research on the profound changes in his performance style (both statements appear in Ben-Ze'ev 1995). The denial is, in any case, not entirely credible, given his direct links with such performers: Robert Levin, for example, acted as Rilling's musicological advisor in several projects, and many of Rilling's vocal soloists, especially since the mid-1980s (e.g., Sybilla Rubens, Ingeborg Danz, Howard Crook, James Taylor, Dietrich Henschel, Franz-Josef Selig), have also appeared frequently with prominent HIP ensembles (for details, see their respective biographies on www.bach-cantatas.com).

The increasing influence of HIP stylistic features on so-called ‘mainstream’ musicians is by no means a unique phenomenon, and indeed has been a prominent feature in the East-German Bach school from the late 1970s. For example, the Thomaskantors from 1941 to 1971 – Günther Ramin, Kurt Thomas and Erhard Mauersberger – maintained a strict, austere style characterised by terraced dynamics and a deliberately rigid approach (at least within movements) to articulation and timbre. Initially, this also characterised the style of Hans-Joachim Rotzsch, who took over in 1971. In 1979, however, Rotzsch began to collaborate with the Neues Bachisches Collegium Musicum, which Max Pommer founded in 1978 with the aim of forging a more historically-informed performance style, albeit on modern instruments (Mikorey and Messmer 1985). The Rotzsch-Pommer performances clearly displayed HIP-influenced stylistic traits (faster tempi, incisive and more varied articulation, locally directional dynamics,⁹ etc.). While Rotzsch later expressed reservations about HIP influences (in *ibid*: 31), his successor (and current Thomaskantor), Georg-Christoph Biller, expressed a preference for period instrument ensembles (in Baumgartner 1999: 7).

Rilling’s assimilation of HIP features, therefore, is part of a wider phenomenon. For many critics, this suggests the adoption of a lighter, more dance-like style; this might seem contrary to Rilling’s repeated demand, in his book, for an intensely expressive approach to Bach. A closer examination, however, reveals that the new HIP-influenced style is well suited for the realisation of some of Rilling’s more ‘romantic’ prescriptions.¹⁰

Rilling's interpretations of the Mass

Rilling's commercial recordings of the Mass come close to covering the full length of his recording career. The 1977 version is his first recording for CBS, with whom he later recorded the two Passions and the *Weihnachts-Oratorium*. At the time, Rilling was about halfway through his cycle of the complete sacred cantatas, and the soloists in his 1977 Mass also made frequent appearances in that cycle.

The 1988 version was made four years after Rilling had completed his cantata cycle.¹¹ It is his only recording for Intercord, and features an orchestra and soloists with whom he collaborated less frequently, at least on record. The notes are by Ulrich Prinz, the Bachakademie's academic director.

The 1999 recording was the penultimate recording of a large-scale choral work to be made especially for the *Edition Bachakademie* (it was followed by Rilling's second recording of the *Weihnachts-Oratorium*). In his liner notes (Rilling 1999), he described this recording of the composer's "Opus Ultimum" as the culmination of his own career as a Bach conductor, coming as it does after he had conducted virtually all of Bach's choral and orchestral music. The ensembles are, once again, Rilling's own ensembles, and the soloists also appear with Rilling in other *Bachakademie* projects (recordings of the secular cantatas, Passions, *Magnificat* and other vocal works). In an interview with the author (November 2001), Rilling stated that he has enjoyed a close collaboration with his record company, Hänssler Classic, by the time this recording of the Mass was made, and that he was closely involved in the recording and editing process – more so than in his earlier recordings of the Mass.

The fact that all three performances employ Rilling's own choir, and two of them employ his own orchestra, arguably makes it easier to ascribe the resulting interpretation to Rilling himself. In the absence of detailed documentation of the rehearsal process, it is difficult to know for certain what aspects of the performance can be ascribed to the conductor as opposed to the musicians under his direction (even when such documentation is available, there might be conflicting interpretations of it). In cases like Rilling's, who works largely with ensembles he had founded, the conductor is likely to have shaped the ensemble's overall style as well as the specific performance – often in co-operation with the musicians (who, in turn, were chosen in part for sharing the conductor's stylistic preferences, or for their willingness to adapt to them).

The 1977 version employs a larger ensemble than either of its successors; coupled with wider vibrati in choir and orchestra alike, this results in a richer, more opulent sound. Slower tempi and a relatively uninflected approach to articulation and timbre within movements often create a static impression – partly balanced, however, by the wide dynamic range in some movements. The later recordings increasingly adopt faster tempi and reveal a growing tendency towards local flexibility, variety and directionality. The differences between the three versions are consistent with developments that can be observed elsewhere in Rilling's discography.

In terms of articulation, the 1999 version is the lightest and most incisive. In terms of dynamics, the picture is more varied. On the one hand, the most wide-ranging long *crescendi* appear in the 1977 version; on the other hand, both the 1988 and 1999 versions feature greater moment-to-moment variety, with more multi-directional changes (small, local rises and falls, as opposed to the extended *crescendi* and *diminuendi* of 1977, in which the same direction of change was maintained over long

stretches of music). The 1988 version contains more instances of terraced contrasts (with some degree of flexibility within each “terrace”) than either of the flanking performances.

In terms of tempo, the 1977 version is the slowest – both in its entire length, and in each and every movement (except for the *Second Kyrie*). The 1999 version is the shortest of the three, but in several individual movements the 1988 version is the fastest (see also the tempo table and illustrative graph). The 1988 version also features more frequent, and wider, tempo modifications – especially concluding *ritardandi*.

The one ideal common to all recordings is textural clarity. Rilling rarely resorts to aggressive aspiration;¹² in other respects, choral singing in the 1977 version is reminiscent of recordings by such Leipzig-school conductors as Rudolf Mauersberger and Karl Richter, particularly in the use of *non legato* articulation to clarify textures. In 1988 and 1999, the choir became progressively smaller, and textural clarity is enhanced through greater unanimity of sound and attack and through more varied articulation.

The relationships between book and recordings

Rilling’s book on the Mass appeared between the first two recordings. Its first edition was published in 1979; he revised it for the 1984 English translation, and again for a second, 1986 German edition (which I was unable to consult). As noted above, the book reveals, both implicitly and explicitly, Rilling’s x/x approach to performance – the belief that performances can, and should, communicate the performer’s views on the music. In a critique on the attempts to analyse performances

in terms of verbally-expressed analyses, philosopher Jerrold Levinson stated:

When we hear a striking PI [Performative Interpretation] of a familiar piece, the question we put to ourselves as interpreters of such interpretations should be not, ‘what CI [Critical Interpretation] does that PI embody or convey?’ [...] but instead ‘What CIs might such a PI support or reflect?’ An insightful PI might prompt one to arrive at a new CI, or allow one to confirm the validity of a CI already proposed, or induce one to question a CI regarded as authoritative, and so on, but it cannot itself unambiguously communicate a CI. (Levinson 1993: 57; cf. Cook 1999: 48-49; Bowen 1999: 446-451; Butt 2002a: 88)

Rilling’s book does, however, come close to specifying, in words, a PI (already an impossibility from Levinson’s viewpoint, which defines a PI not as a set of instructions for performance, but as the performance itself) which would communicate his own CI of the work. It is significant, of course, that he needs to explain his views on the music before proceeding to give his explicit performance suggestions – the latter cannot simply stand on their own and “unambiguously communicate” the former. However, even if one accepts Levinson’s viewpoint, one could still expect Rilling’s recordings to be “support or reflect” his verbally-expressed views on Bach’s music – especially given his x/x philosophy.

More specifically, one would expect a particularly strong correlation between the book and the performance that is chronologically closest to it. This correlation would probably be incomplete – performance decisions, even in the studio, are sometimes made on the spur of the moment, and are partially affected by factors outside the musicians’ control (including, in the case of recording, the production team’s contribution). However, one might still expect the 1977 recording (made, in all probability, while or shortly before Rilling started writing his book) to be similar in spirit, and at least in several details, to the type of performance recommended in the book. The other recordings, on the other hand, might reflect Rilling’s subsequent thinking, his later ideas,

and one would therefore expect to find fewer correspondences between them and his book.

In some respects, listeners and readers are likely to conclude that this is indeed the case. Rilling's performances have increasingly reflected the influence of period-instrument performances; but these influences largely post-date the book, which rarely touches upon performance-practice issues. George Stauffer (1993: 258) writes that Rilling's "suggestions for performance are closer to nineteenth-century traditions than to the practices of Bach's day". Reading the book on its own, that conclusion is understandable. Rilling describes individual movements in the Mass in terms of dramatic development, of gathering and release of tension, and believes that these patterns should be realised in performance. Despite his general advocacy of terraced dynamics, he often recommends large-scale, gradual dynamic build-ups towards climaxes (e.g., Rilling 1984: 8 [*First Kyrie*], 14 [*Second Kyrie*], 70 [*Incarnatus*], 131 [*Sanctus*]; see also my discussion of Rilling's interpretations of the *Crucifixus* below). He also recommends the employment of smaller dynamic inflections to create localised variety or a sense of purpose within phrases (e.g., *ibid*: 24 [*Gloria*], 27 [*Laudamus*], 34 [*Domine deus*]), and suggests variety of articulation as a means of distinguishing between themes or sections (e.g., *ibid*: 14 [*Second Kyrie*], 24 [*Gloria*], 55 [*Credo*]; see also my discussion of Rilling's interpretation of the *Qui tollis* and *Qui sedes* below). For the most part, he neither prescribes nor proscribes varied articulation within phrases.

Rilling's emphasis on overall development arguably reveals a certain degree of anachronism, as Stauffer suggests. Performance practice research suggests that performance in the Baroque era had a flexible, locally-inflected, speech-like quality. As David Schulenberg puts it,

the chief distinction between Baroque and later expression may be that in [the former] the signs are small *figures* in the surface, while in later music the signs take the form of larger music *processes*, such as the extended crescendo or the prolonged dissonance. (Schulenberg 1992: 105; see also Harnoncourt 1988: 39-49 and *passim*; Butt 1990: 12-15 and *passim*; Butt 1991: 84-86; Butt 1994: 41-51; Gustav Leonhardt, in Sherman 1997: 196; Fabian 2003: 245-246 and *passim*; Golomb 2005, section 4.1.1; Golomb 2006)

During the period in which all versions of the book were written (1979-1986), Rilling emphatically rejected this viewpoint and the performances it inspired (Rilling 1985: 14). He analysed Bach's music in terms of large-scale patterns of tension and release, and insisted that these patterns must be projected in performance. In the notes to his 1999 recording of the Mass, Rilling reiterated his belief that performers must project "the arc of tension woven into [the work's] overall architecture" (Rilling 1999: 29). In his actual performances, Rilling has increasingly adopted the locally-inflected phrasing of HIP musicians; as far as one could judge from his recordings, however, this development largely postdates all versions of his book.

Rilling's 1977 performance would probably strike many listeners as 'romantic' in its thick textures, wide dynamic range, slow tempi and predominantly *legato* articulation – features that are much less characteristic of his later recordings. In this, it would indeed seem consistent with his book. A closer comparison between the book and the performances, however, sheds a different light on the former: although their sound-world is less 'romantic', the 1988 and 1999 versions realise many more of Rilling's 1979/1984 recommendations.

This generalisation is not without exceptions: there are cases where the 1977 recording offers a detailed realisation of the 1979 recommendations. The most notable example is the *Crucifixus*. Rilling analysed this movement as proceeding gradually towards an expressive peak in the so-called 10th variation (bars 37-10), and advocated a

performance which moves gradually yet inexorably towards a climax, and from there to a subdued conclusion. In the first edition, he wrote that this pattern of rising and falling intensity must be reflected in performance.

The conductor should project

an arch of constant intensification from the thin texture and resulting restraint of variations 2 and 3 to the climax of the dissonant variation 10. The relaxation of sound begins at the end of the eleventh variation and continues in a constant diminuendo through the ever-lower-moving setting, until the end of the final chord. The spectrum of expression that is available for the interpretation of the text ranges from the plaintive restraint of the beginning, where one hardly dares utter the word crucifixus, to the piercing sharpness and uncompromising harshness that characterize the dissonant entrances in the tenth variations. (Rilling 1984: 76)

This recommendation can be read as a fairly accurate description of Rilling's performance of this movement in the 1977 recording.

In the original edition (Rilling 1979: 80), this arch-of-tension interpretation was presented as Rilling's sole recommendation for performance. When he revised the text for the 1984 English edition, however, he added an alternative suggestion for performers, which he presented as equally viable:

considering the location of the movement in the SYMBOLUM NICENUM and the explicit omission of the first soprano, one could perform [the CRUCIFIXUS] with restrained dynamics throughout, in order to provide a sharp contrast with the following ET RESURREXIT. (Rilling 1984: 76)

“*Restrained dynamics throughout*” is a fairly accurate description of Rilling's approach in the 1988 recording. It should be noted, however, that while the dynamic range of this recording is much narrower than that of the 1977 recording, the 1988 version features a greater variety of articulation and localised, multi-directional dynamic inflections (small, local *crescendi* and *diminuendi*, as opposed to the single, all-encompassing dynamic arch of the 1977 recording).

In another comment added to the revised version, Rilling writes that the movement's climax-oriented shape can be projected “*through deliberate variations in the character of [the choir's] diction*” (ibid), rather than through dynamics. In the 1999 recording, he demonstrates how diction, accent and articulation can create a sense of heightened intensity in variations 10-11 even within a narrow dynamic range. The choir adopts a heavier, more *marcato* articulation in these variations than in earlier portions of the movement, with particular emphases on each voice's entries (the effect is emphasised by the more *legato* articulation in the “*passus et sepultus est*”, variations 8-9, bars 29-36). The soprano's heavier accentuation is sensed almost throughout. The soprano's longer note values in bars 43-44 lead to softer articulation, but this is balanced by the more incisive articulation of the crotchets in the alto and bass (bars 43) and the tenor (bar 44). The effect is enhanced by the choir's clear enunciation of the consonants (though that, in itself, does not seem sharper here than in the rest of the movement).

Here, book and recordings chart the same course. In the 1970s, Rilling preaches and practices a seemingly ‘romantic’ interpretation, based primarily on the use of dynamics. In the 1980s and 1990s, his interpretation becomes more restrained, in theory and practice alike.

However, this seemingly straightforward example proves to be the exception rather than the rule. For one thing, even in the 1979 edition, Rilling sometimes suggest several different performative interpretations for the same movement. A primary example is the *Qui sedes*. In his performance notes for this movement, Rilling explicitly states that “*There are a number of possibilities for tempo*”:

A very slow tempo, which would demand considerable sustaining power from the two soloists [the alto and the oboe obbligato], would [...] stress the gravity of the textual message. [...] a faster tempo, in which the listener feels the half measure as the basic pulse, would release the

meditative tension of the QUI TOLLIS PECCATA MUNDI and emphasize the playful component of the 6/8 meter. (Rilling 1984: 40)

Predictably, Rilling chooses the slower tempo in 1977 (total duration 6'33") and the faster one in 1988 (total duration 4'42") and 1999 (total duration 4'48"). Articulation in all three performances is consistent with his prescribed parameters: Rilling argues that notated staccati quavers should be "*definitely detached, but played relatively long*" (ibid). The distinction between the *legato* and *staccato* portions, however, is clearer in the later two recordings than in the 1977 version. Both later versions sound more restrained: the basic parameters for 1977 are *forte* and *sostenuto*, especially in the strings, whereas the later versions employ quieter dynamics and lighter articulation. Within these parameters, however, these performances employ a greater degree of local nuance (metric accentuation, directional dynamics proceeding beyond bar lines). The metrical element is most strongly projected in the 1999 version. Here, Rilling's different performances give different elucidations for the same words: despite the clear differences in articulation between them, they are all consistent with his prescriptions. At least in this particular case, Rilling's recommendations underdetermine the performance.

All the above-mentioned cases, however, are exceptions (albeit highly significant ones). As a rule, Rilling's 1977 version is the **least** consistent with his own book, despite the chronological proximity; the CBS recording is usually more uniform than the book demands.

This is especially notable in the approach to articulation. In the *Qui tollis*, for instance, Rilling sees "the variety within the theme" – the contrast between repeated notes (Qui tollis pec-: ♩|♩) and the following melismas (♩|♩| ♩|♩|♩|♩) – as an important source of "expressive strength" in the vocal lines:

For the performance of this movement, it is crucial that the nearly static beginning of the theme and its quasi-expressive continuation be clearly

articulated in each of the three fugato developments. However, the periods with the texts miserere nobis [...] and deprecationem nostram [...] must stand in relief against the theme through the use of consistently legato articulation. (Rilling 1984: 37)

He also insists on a clear differentiation between “*independent rhythmic motion of the continuo and cello*”, the “*sixteenth-note movement in the flutes*” and “*the underlying eighths in the strings*” (ibid). Overall, Rilling states that “Bach wanted all elements of the orchestra to participate in the subjective expression of the movement, with increasing agitation from bottom to top” (ibid: 36).

In the 1977 version, he takes little heed of this advice. The performance is shaped almost exclusively by its dynamic contours: Rilling projects the *Qui tollis* in three dynamic waves (bars 1-29, 30-41, 42-end), each with its own pattern of rise-and-fall. Articulation is almost constantly smooth; individual motifs and strands are barely differentiated, and the texture is dominated by the choir and flutes.

In 1988, Rilling placed a stronger emphasis on texture in shaping the movement, in closer accord with his own analysis. In 1977, most interpretive details appeared in the choir, which was placed against a comparatively neutral and unvaried orchestral background. In 1988, there is greater equality of detail between choir and orchestra, though the size of the latter seems to have been reduced (the string section in this movement seems to consist of one player per part). Rilling brings out the instrumental bass line patterns (*staccato* ♩ in the cellos, ♩ in the continuo)¹³ and the clearly-separated, sigh-like *legato* quaver pairs in the violas. The vocal parts are shaped with a clear upbeat-to-downbeat trajectory, which provides a sense of direction even when individual crotchets or quaver-pairs are distinctly separated. Here, the articulatory patterns proposed in the book are audible in the performance. This facilitates a clearer exposition of the relationships between the voices:

since each figure is shaped differently, patterns of imitation, and the simultaneous appearances of several figures, are audible as such. On the other hand, it gives the movement as a whole a somewhat halting effect.

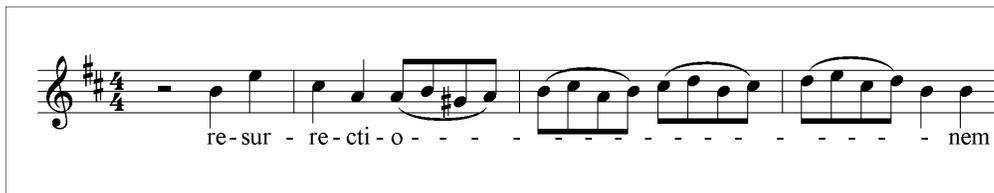
The 1999 version displays a similar articulatory variety, but partly revives the dynamic directionality of the 1977 version. Rilling retains the “qui tollis”/ “peccata” / “miserere nobis” contrasts outlined in his book, but in a more continuous context: metric accentuation is lighter, the separation between crotchets and quaver-pairs is more subtle and their connection through directional dynamics clearer. The dynamic range of the 1988 and 1999 readings is smaller than in 1977, but the rate of change is more frequent – especially in 1999; dynamic inflections reflect the contours of individual phrase, not just large-scale patterns.

It is clear from his book that Rilling recognised the expressive import of motivic details already in the late 1970s – hence his combined demands, in his book, for varied articulation and attention to orchestral detail. Yet in his 1977 recording, he seems to virtually ignore the 1979 recommendations, whereas the 1988 and 1999 recordings come much closer to a realisation of the conductor’s own stated views.

A similar pattern can be observed in the D-major trumpets-and-drums choruses. For these movements, Rilling advocates a fast tempo – not so fast as to jeopardise “*a flawless choral performance*”, but fast enough to guarantee “*an unequivocal, forward-pressing character*” and “*to make the virtuosic component of the movement immediately perceptible*” (Rilling 1984: 87; see also *ibid*: 20, 27, 48, 114, 131, 140). Not surprisingly, this is allied with a recommendation for light articulation; and the references to “*forward-pressing character*” are connected with an advocacy of directional dynamics.

In these movements, the 1999 recording usually comes closest to realising Rilling’s stated ideals, while the 1977 version – with its

comparatively slower tempo, heavier articulation and more uniform dynamics – is usually wide of the mark. In a few cases, the adoption of techniques reminiscent of historical performance has helped Rilling to realise some romantic-sounding verbal imagery. For instance, Rilling views the *Vivace ed Allegro* setting of the words “et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum” at the end of the *Symbolum Nicenum* as a composed *crescendo*, with increasingly higher register and “constantly expanding instrumentation”, all of which “depict excitingly the jubilant vision of the resurrection that breaks out of the somber final bars of the [preceding] adagio” (Rilling 1984: 104). This “building in intensity” marks the concluding “Amen” (bars 88-105) as the “climax” of the movement and of the entire *Symbolum Nicenum* (ibid: 110). He similarly regards the movement’s motivic details as densely pictorial and dramatic: in the alternation of orchestral fanfares (♪♪) and timpani strokes he hears “the sound of the last trumpet and the quaking of the earth on the day of resurrection” (ibid: 105), and the rising choral sequences –



embody, in his view, “the gesture of the ‘climb to heaven’ in the new context¹⁴ of the resurrection of the dead” (ibid: 107).

Consequently, Rilling believes that

The musical realization of [this section] must be possessed of extraordinary vitality and must, in many ways, have an almost ecstatic dimension. This indicates the necessity for a relentless dynamic intensity and a vehement grasp of the intensifications that ensue from the structure of the piece. (Rilling 1984: 114)

He also insists that that no figures in the texture be allowed to submerge by others, and recommends that

the articulation of both the choir and orchestra should possess intensity throughout, and therefore must avoid both a gentle legato and the playful informality of a too-short staccato. (ibid)

In his brief recommendation for performance, Rilling does not mention most of the specific figures he outlined in his analysis a few pages earlier. We should recall, however, his general statement in the introduction – that the “aggregate of the thoughts and observations presented necessarily has implications for the shaping of the work in performance” (Rilling 1984: x), even if these are not explicitly spelled out. His articulation prescriptions are consistent with this: “*gentle legato*” should be avoided in order to ensure that the figures are clearly detectable and separated from one another; “*playful informality*” should be avoided as it negates their symbolic and expressive import.

Again, the 1977 recording does not live up to the conductor’s own standards, especially when compared to his later renditions. The actual timing of the three performances is not that different (2’14” in 1977, 2’11” in 1988, 2’05” in 1999). Most listeners, however, will probably find the 1988 and 1999 versions faster and lighter, because of the difference in articulation, accentuation, dynamics and texture. In 1977, Rilling seems to go more for “*relentless dynamic intensity*” than for **intensification**, ignoring his own demand for a performance which is “*progressively stronger and more dramatic*”. In terms of articulation, one could argue that he abides by the letter of his recommendation, avoiding both “*gentle legato*” and “*too-short staccato*”; yet neither his dynamics nor his articulation in this recording allows for the sense of development and forward thrust that he clearly deems essential in his writing.

In his 1999 version, by contrast, he allows dynamic shaping of individual phrases and motifs, as well as several larger *crescendi*. The articulation is much more varied, with accentuations of the ♪♪ figure,

clear anacrusis-downbeat patterns in “ex PE” and “et VI”,¹⁵ and of “resuREcti” (see music example above). He thus brings out clearly the figures he focuses on in his analysis, in a manner which also supports his demand for rising intensity, both locally and across the entire movement. The 1999 recording, then, is a much clearer realisation of the 1979 interpretation-in-theory; its clear teleology illustrates Rilling’s demand for a performance possessing “*an almost ecstatic dimension*” more clearly than either of its predecessors, especially the 1977 version.¹⁶ Even many of the specific techniques which Rilling did not describe in his book can be clearly related to the 1979 analysis, and the expressive aims that Rilling had set himself at the time.

Summary

The attempt to understand musicians’ performances through a comparison with their stated views on the music and its performance is always problematic (as is the opposite and complementary project: attempting to understand the performers’ words by comparing them with their recordings). It is always possible that the performer’s words might represent a post-hoc justification for performative choices, rather than the thought processes that shaped the performance. In other cases, the performer’s words and the musical choices documented in the recording are difficult to reconcile with each other. My comparison of Rilling’s statements with his performative practices – and similar comparisons I made, in other contexts, between the statements and practices of other performers¹⁷ – confirm what one would suspect in any case: that performers’ stated ideals cannot, in themselves, be used to predict their approach in practice (see also Butt 2002a: 42).

More often, the performance would illuminate the verbal discourse, clarifying what performers might have meant in their employment of certain terms or images, or showing how they prioritise between conflicting demands they expresses in words. Rilling's prescriptions for articulation in the *Qui sedes* (see p. 95 above) could be seen as a case in point. His demand that notated staccati quavers should be "*definitely detached, but played relatively long*" is arguably realised in all three performances, yet these differ radically from each other. Here, Rilling advises performers to balance between seemingly contradictory demands, and his own response to this advice has changed: in 1977, he emphasised his recommendation that the notes be "*played relatively long*", whereas in 1988 and 1999 the emphasis shifted towards ensuring that they be "*definitely detached*". This specific shift in emphasis was consistent with Rilling's general willingness, in the later performances, to allow a more dance-like rendition of this movement.

In general, however, Rilling's performance prescriptions, in conjunction with his analyses, are specific enough to allow a detailed comparison between them and his recorded performances; and they shed an interesting light on each other. An isolated reading of the book, without reference to the recordings, could lead to the conclusion that he is presenting a 'romantic' vision of the music, and advocates a similarly 'romantic' style of performance. Similarly, listening to the three performances without reference to the book, listeners might conclude that the 1977 version is the closest to 'romanticism'.

As I already noted (see note 10 above), the term 'romantic' is only partially applicable here. A more appropriate term might be 'romantic modernism'. John Butt (2002b) uses this term to indicate the application of 'romantic' performance techniques in a manner removed from the romantic ideology of performative freedom and individualism. The latter

ideology demands variety – varying the presence and intensity of features like vibrato and gradual dynamic inflection in accordance to the desired level of expression. “Classical modernism” turns these features “off”. “Romantic modernism” turns some of them “on” (e.g., equalised vibrato and *legato*) while restraining others (e.g., applying a wide dynamic range in a calculated, non-improvisatory manner). Both types of “modernism” avoid spontaneity, preferring to project “an aura of professionalism and specialism”.

‘Romantic modernism’ is clearly felt in the 1977 version, accounting for the ‘romantic’ association this recording engenders for several listeners and critics. One could argue that a similar spirit informs the analyses and performance recommendations in his book. While placing an emphasis on the work’s expressive character, Rilling usually avoids richly metaphorical language (his account of the *Expecto* is an exception in this respect), preferring a more ‘objective’ style (cf. Dreyfus 1996: 103).

The rigidity of ‘romantic modernism’, however, can also help explain why Rilling’s *espressivo* recommendations are better realised in the later versions. By then, Rilling reveals a greater willingness to shape individual phrases with localised inflections. Rilling’s newer style, for all its greater lightness, is therefore better suited than his older, ‘traditional’ style to realising his richly expressive vision of the work. Elsewhere, Rilling explicitly advocates a sense of lightness, even playfulness, which sits uneasily with the traditions that inform his 1970s style.

Overall, the 1999 version (and, to a lesser extent, the 1988 version) converges closely on the performance recommendations and detailed interpretations that Rilling offered in 1979. This is especially true in the D-major choruses, in movements where Rilling discerns dance-like qualities, and in cases where Rilling explicitly advocates detailed

articulation and clear separation and individual shaping for particular figures and motifs. In those cases where Rilling, in his book, focuses primarily on the shaping of the movement as a whole (most notably the *First Kyrie*,¹⁸ the *Incarnatus* and the *Crucifixus*), the 1977 version comes closest to realising the 1979 prescriptions. Even in these cases, however, the 1988 and 1999 versions are consistent with most of the book's performance recommendations.

Several factors can account for the closer proximity between Rilling's theory and practice in 1988 and 1999. First of all, Rilling's earlier style is often characterised by dynamic uniformity and an avoidance of strong tensions. This limits the possibilities for generating momentum, inhibiting Rilling's options for realising his own analyses. As already noted, the 1977 recording comes closest to the conductor's own recommendations in movements which he projects in single dynamic trajectories. The discrepancies are more clearly felt where the analysis refers to several focal points of tension, or to alternation between several elements (e.g., *Second Kyrie*, *Et in terra*, *Qui sedes*, *Agnus dei*; Rilling 1984: 12-14, 22-24, 38-41, 145-149). The greater flexibility of his later style allows greater scope for realising such internal diversity.

Flexibility is often directly advocated in the book.¹⁹ The 1977 version, however, incorporates many features more redolent of the "Lutheran" tradition, with its strictly terraced approach; the strictness associated with that tradition is felt especially in the celebratory D-major choruses. This too inhibits the realisation of the type of inflected readings Rilling advocates in his book.

Another important area is articulation. As noted on p. 82 above, Rilling mostly advocates articulatory variety between phrases. Even this limited degree of differentiation, however, is not often realised in the 1977 Mass, where *non legato* is used primarily for clarification. In the

later recordings, on the other hand, Rilling is much more willing to realise in practice the varied articulation he preaches in his book.

Rilling made explicit references to most of these changes (e.g., Rilling 1999: 28). He attributes them to his growing acquaintance with Bach's *oeuvre* and idiom and with musicological research into performance practice. He also cites improvements in the constitution of his performing ensembles. Rilling consistently advocated the use of "an ensemble of essentially chamber dimensions" which should nonetheless take into account the drier acoustics of larger modern halls (Rilling 1985: 15); the choir, he says, should consist of lighter, younger voices (his choristers are mostly aged 25-30; Rilling 2001). His precise definition of "chamber ensemble", however, has changed: he estimates that he has gradually gone down from a 40-strong choir to about 24 singers (Parrott and Rilling 2000: 39). He claims that he now has stronger, better-trained voices at his disposal, and using a smaller ensemble allows him to increase clarity without losing strength. Presumably, the smaller choir also makes it easier to achieve greater dynamic flexibility and more variety in articulation.

The influence of period instrument performances, however, is another likely explanation. All the changes in Rilling's performance style – faster tempi, brighter timbres and textures, smaller performing forces, greater local variety of articulation and dynamics, and so forth – are redolent of HIP performance (similarities can be noted, for instance, with the recordings of John Eliot Gardiner, Richard Hickox, Philippe Herreweghe and Ton Koopman). In a review of the 1999 Mass, Bernard Sherman (1999) characterised Rilling's stylistic development as "a barometer of musical taste", an indicator on the influence of HIP practices on mainstream performance.²⁰ Like some of his Leipzig colleagues, Rilling displayed an ambivalent attitude towards HIP, but

increasingly adopted its practices. This proved to have a decisive influence on his approach to expression, which had always been ostensibly x/x. Though he does not immediately acknowledge HIP influences, it should be noted that he has been in continuous contact with several prominent HIP musicians, as noted above.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, Rilling's stylistic approach resonated with the styles of other German church traditions – such as that of the Leipzig school and of Karl Richter. In subsequent decades, his style increasingly came to incorporate HIP elements. This development made it easier for him to realise his own vision of the work: Rilling's prescriptions for a detailed, expressive rendition of Bach's music in his 1979 book are more closely realised in his later, HIP-influenced readings.

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Discography

Helmuth Rilling 1977

Orchestra: Bach-Collegium Stuttgart

Continuo: organ

Choir: Gächinger Kantorei Stuttgart

Soloists:

Soprano: Arleen Augér

Soprano 2 & Alto: Julia Hamari

Tenor: Adalbert Kraus

Bass: Siegmund Nimsgern

Location and date of recording: Stuttgart; April 1977

First catalogue number: CBS 79 307. 3 LPs. Issued 1977.

Copies consulted: CBS Maestro M2YK 45615. 2 CDs. Issued c. 1985
CBS Odyssey MB2K 45615. 2 CDs. Issued 1989.

Helmuth Rilling 1988a

Orchestra: Stuttgarter Kammerorchester

Size: Strings 5-4-4-3-1

Continuo: organ

Choir: Gächinger Kantorei Stuttgart

Size: 8-8-13-11-11²¹

Soloists:

Soprano: Ulrike Sonntag

Soprano 2 & Alto: Marjana Lipovšek

Tenor: Howard Crook

Bass: Andreas Schmidt

Location and date of recording: Kirche der Karlshöhe, Ludwigsburg; May 1988. First catalogue number: Intercord INT 885 855. 2 CDs. Issued 1988.

*** Helmuth Rilling 1988b**

Orchestra: Stuttgarter Kammerorchester

Choir: Gächinger Kantorei Stuttgart

Soloists:

Soprano: Arleen Augér

Alto: Anne Sophie von Otter

Tenor: Aldo Baldin

Bass: Wolfgang Schöne

Date of recording: 1988

First catalogue number: Platz PLLC 5004/5005. 2 CDs. Also available on DVD.

Special comments: Information from <http://www.bach-cantatas.com/Vocal/BWV232-Rec5.htm>,

http://www.bekkoame.ne.jp/~hippo/musik/title/bach_bwv232.html,
<http://www.hmv.co.jp/product/detail.asp?sku=1939638>.

Helmuth Rilling 1999

Orchestra: Bach-Collegium Stuttgart

Size: Strings 6-5-4-3-2²²

Continuo: organ

Choir: Gächinger Kantorei Stuttgart

Size: 6-6-6-6-6

Soloists:

Soprano 1: Sibylla Rubens

Soprano 2: Juliane Banse

Alto: Ingeborg Danz

Tenor: James Taylor

Bass 1 (*Et in spiritum*): Andreas Schmidt

Bass 2 (*Quoniam*): Thomas Quasthoff

Location and date of recording: Stadthalle Sindelfingen; March 1999

First catalogue number: Hänssler Edition Bachakademie, vol. 70 (CD 92.070). 2 CDs. Issued 1999.

¹ This paper is based, in part, on my doctoral dissertation, *Expression and Meaning in Bach Performance and Reception: An Examination of the B minor Mass on Record*, and in particular on the section devoted to Helmuth Rilling ([Golomb 2004](#): 68-81).

² I am aware of the existence of another recording, made in 1988 but released much later. This recording is based on a televised broadcast, and has recently been released on DVD. It was made in the same year as Rilling's second commercial recording – 1988 – but features a different orchestra and different soloists. Unfortunately, I have not been able to consult this recording. Its details are listed in the discography under the heading Rilling 1988b; it is marked with an asterisk, to indicate that I have not heard it. A further recording of the Mass under Helmuth Rilling was issued in 2006 by Hänssler

Classics. This recording was released after this paper was completed, and consequently I was unable to refer to it in my discussion. See also note 11 below.

³ All italicised quotes in this paper were also italicised in the original.

⁴ In this paper, the word “performative” means “in, of, or through musical performance” (see also [Levinson 1993](#)).

⁵ This view is neither self-evident nor universally held among performers generally, and Bach performers in particular. In this paper, I employ a schematic categorisation of views on the relation between the performers’ perception of the music and the features they choose to realise in practice (see also [Golomb 2004](#): 25-26). The phrasing below refers to expressive intensity, but can also be applied to other parameters:

1. $+/+$: This music is expressive, and should therefore be performed expressively;
2. $+/-$: This music is so expressive that it could (or should) be performed inexpressively;
3. $-/+$: This music is not expressive, but should be performed expressively;
4. $-/-$: This music is not expressive, and should not be performed as if it were.

This scheme obviously demands several qualifications – above and beyond the necessity of finding out what performers and critics alike mean by “expressive” and related terms. Furthermore, it refers only to views of a particular work, not to an overarching ideology; no performer or critic regards all music as equally expressive. A scheme for positions “in principle” might recognise the following options:

1. $x/+$: Performance should always be as expressive as possible – whatever the music’s own expressive intensity (in practice, this means $+/+$ for music perceived as expressive, and $-/+$ for music perceived as inexpressive).
2. $x/-$: Performance should always be contained and restrained, allowing music to speak for itself whatever its own expressive intensity ($+/-$ for music perceived as expressive, $-/-$ for music perceived as inexpressive).
3. x/x : The level of expressive intensity in the performance should be calibrated with the level of expressive intensity in the music ($+/+$ for music perceived as expressive, $-/-$ for music perceived as inexpressive).

⁶ It should be noted that recordings do not constitute a straightforward documentation of musicians’ interpretations. In the context of studio recordings (a category which encompasses all the recordings discussed in this paper), it is difficult to assess the performers’ contribution, beyond supplying the raw materials from which the recording was constructed. The input from the production team is considerable, both during the recording sessions and in post-session editing (for more on this issues, see [Gould 1984](#): 331-368, esp. 337-343; [Day 2000](#): Chapter One, esp. 23-38, 46-52; [Monsaingeon 2002](#): Part Two; [Tomes 2004](#): 140-150, 155-159; [Philip 2004](#): Chapter Two, esp. 42-62; [Golomb 2004](#): 15-16). Unedited live recordings partly circumvent the problem of editorial interference (though the production team still has considerable influence through the choice of equipment, the placing of microphones etc.); such a recording, however, inevitably reflects the accidental features of a

particular evening. Only when the performers are intimately involved in the recording and editing process can the recording be safely described as reflecting their interpretation at the time. These issues exacerbate a problem which plagues any attempt to interpret a choral-orchestral performance: assessing the role of the conductor *vis-à-vis* the other musicians. I discuss briefly the issue of Rilling's involvement in the production of his recordings, and his role in shaping the ensembles that performed under his direction, later in this article. In general, I have reason to believe that his recordings document the interpretation that he and the musicians under his direction were likely to have given in concerts around the period of the recording. In any case, recordings provide the best documentation for musical performances; however imperfect that documentation might be, there is, as far as I am aware, no credible alternative for it.

⁷ The directors of these institutes after 1971 started to adopt a different, more HIP-influenced performance style, as I will discuss briefly below.

⁸ For more on this subject, see Golomb 2004: 53-55. By x/- spectrum, I mean that this school included writers and performers who believed that Bach's music is intensely expressive but should be performed with austere restraint (+/-), as well as writers and performers who regarded austere restraint as an integral feature of Bach's own music (-/-). Arnold Schering provides an especially clear demonstration of the +/- approach (see, for example, Schering 1931: 171; 1936: 187-188; 1941: 71; 1974: 87-89), Wilibald Gurlitt of the -/- approach (see, for example, Gurlitt 1951: 75-79).

⁹ The term "directionality" refers in this paper to patterns of tension-and-resolution that affect the sense of goal-orientation in the music. This encompasses both "local directionality" – ebb-and-flow within individual phrases – and "overall directionality" across an entire movement (Cohen 1994: 34-37). When referring to a performance as "directional", I mean that the performers audibly seek to underline or highlight patterns of tension-and-resolution (especially harmonic patterns) in their performances. By "directional dynamics", I refer to the use of dynamics to underline or highlight such patterns. In several cases, this is related to wave dynamics – that is, dynamics that rise and fall in correspondence to the rise and fall of melodic contours.

¹⁰ There is no consistent definition of 'romanticism' in the context of Bach performance; indeed, several performers (most notably Karl Richter, Otto Klemperer and Nikolaus Harnoncourt) have been called 'romantic' and 'anti-romantic' by different critics. In my dissertation (see Golomb 2004: pp. 36-51), I define a 'romantic' Bach performance as a performance that satisfies all three of the following criteria: it is **anachronistic** (i.e., the performers adopt techniques that are more associated with 19th-century music than with music of Bach's era); it audibly strives towards **expressive intensity** (that is, features in the performance are most readily explainable as an attempt by the performers to achieve an expressive performance); and it audibly strives towards an **individualistic interpretation**. According to this view, the existence of just one or even two of these criteria is not sufficient to define a performance as 'romantic', though it might well explain why some critics have referred to it as such (for example, Klemperer's Bach performances were considered 'romantic' primarily because of their perceived anachronism). In Rilling's case, the 1977 version does not, in my view, satisfy the third criterion (that is, the performance does not contain significant departures from the prevailing Bach style

of the period that could be clearly identified as ‘idiosyncratic’ or ‘personalised’); however, the strive towards expression is clearly noticeable, as is Rilling’s knowing anachronism.

¹¹ This paragraph, and all subsequent references to “Rilling 1988”, refers to the recording listed in the discography as Rilling 1988a. As noted above (see note 2), I have been unable to consult the recording listed in the discography as Rilling 1988b. Two of the soloists in that latter recording (Arleen Augér and Wolfgang Schöne) also appeared in the 1977 recording; the tenor, Aldo Baldin, appeared frequently in Rilling’s 1970-1984 cycle of the complete sacred cantatas.

¹² The word “aspiration”, used in the context of choral singing, comes from the verb “to aspirate”. It refers to the use of syllables like “he-he-he” to accentuate and separate individual notes in melismatic passages.

¹³ Rilling also suggests that the “*independent rhythmic motion of the continuo and cello must be clear enough so that when they abandon their independent lines from time to time in cadential measures [...] and join into the expressive flow of the vocal setting, the change is clearly audible*” (Rilling 1984: 37). This recommendation is not fully realised in any of his recordings. The effect is most vividly realised in the recordings directed by Thomas Hengelbrock (Deutsche Harmonia Mundi 1996) and Konrad Junghänel (Harmonia Mundi France 2003).

¹⁴ The new context is the setting of “Et expecto resurrectionem” – in contrast to the old context (the second movement of Cantata No. 120, which served as the model for this movement in the Mass). As Rilling notes, this figure is associated with a rise in the cantata as well, calling upon jubilant voices to rise to heaven (“Steiget bis zum Himmel’n auf”).

¹⁵ This is achieved by a *staccato* shortening of the anacrusis, followed by definite accentuation of the downbeat note, which is sung *tenuto*.

¹⁶ Several of the features I noted in the 1999 version – for example, the anacrusis-downbeat patterns – are also present in the 1988 recording, which already features lighter and more detailed articulation in comparison with the 1977 version. However, that version remains less detailed than the 1999 version; its dynamic range is also narrower. Consequently, there is more textural clarity and cumulative tension alike in the 1999 version.

¹⁷ The first part of my doctoral dissertation (Golomb 2004: 36-162) was largely devoted to a comparison between the views and practices of several prominent Bach conductors, taking their recordings of the B-minor Mass as my primary case-study.

¹⁸ On Rilling’s performances of this movement, see also Golomb 2005.

¹⁹ In discussing the *Laudamus*, for example, Rilling calls for “*a variety of dynamics*” in the orchestral parts, to ensure textural clarity and clear exposition of “*individual thematic figurations*” (Rilling 1984: 27). There is little trace of this in the dynamically-uniform 1977 reading. Here, Rilling comes closest to realising his own recommendations in 1988 (in 1999, the requisite variety is present in the solo violin and soprano, but less so in the orchestral strings).

²⁰ Other modern-instrument recordings of the B-minor Mass revealing a similar HIP influence include those conducted by Claudio Abbado (Universal 1999), Seiji Ozawa (Philips 2000) and Georg

Christoph Biller (Philips 2000). Biller, the current Thomaskantor, has recently released another recording of the Mass, this time with a period-instrument ensemble.

²¹ The booklet names 16 sopranos; I assumed equal distribution between the two sections.

²² Rilling (1999: 28) cites this as the “maximum size”; “where suitable, we reduced the instrumentation to comply with the structure of a specific movement”.