



THOMANERCHOR
LEIPZIG

A tradition of more than 800 years in music and city history, a widely acknowledged contemporary reputation, almost one hundred boys and young men with individual personalities and a common passion for music, framed by a unique future-oriented cultural and educational landscape: That is Thomanerchor Leipzig – the St. Thomas Choir Leipzig.

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WORDS OF GREETING



Dear Music Friends,

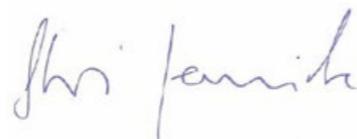
To swear to the resplendence of St. Thomas Choir Leipzig and Johann Sebastian Bach its most famous cantor in Leipzig's history of music from the past to the present, truly would be like carrying coal to Newcastle.

The history of the St. Thomas Choir Leipzig dates back much further, however, than the rich period of Bach's work. The reformer Martin Luther heard the widely acclaimed boy choir in 1519 at the opening of the Leipzig Disputation. About 200 years later, Georg Philipp Telemann declined the position of Thomaskantor to the good fortune of Leipzig's history and maybe even the music world as a whole. The city became the envy of the whole country – even to this day.

The 2012 celebrations of the 800th anniversary of the trifecta of the St. Thomas Choir Leipzig, St. Thomas Church Leipzig, and St. Thomas School Leipzig are most memorable. They made very clear to what extent Leipzig's way of caring for its cultural heritage is appreciated worldwide. There is still a city whose citizens and their guests can regularly enjoy world renown music for the price of a concert program.

The St. Thomas Choir Leipzig and its greatest cantor are among the most valuable gifts in the history of our city. The best thing about this gift is that we do not need to display it in a museum show case, because this immense cultural wealth from the young singers is embodied every day in our city. The choir takes its strength to cope with life's ups and downs from its solid roots in the Christian faith and the integral relationship to the people of Leipzig.

The St. Thomas Choir Leipzig already the age of the biblical Methuselah is alive and full of surprises. It embodies great music at its best and is central to the beating heart of a vibrant city of culture.



Cordially yours,

DR. SKADI JENNICKE

Mayor for Cultural Affairs City of Leipzig



Dear Friends of the St. Thomas Choir Leipzig,

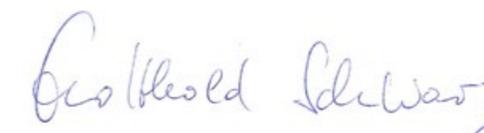
Singing together in the St. Thomas Choir Leipzig and living together in the Alumnat (the so-called "Kasten"/"Box") the Thomaner are privileged to work day after day and week after week with wonderful works of sacred music so that countless listeners may experience this music.

The members of the choir are like all young people of their time with electronic media and other benefits of the modern world. They use computers and smartphones and are familiar with the opportunities and challenges of life in the 21st century.

They are aware of the treasures they possess that can never be conveyed through an electronic device. It is through daily singing that the Thomaner internalize the content and musical values that will be so important for sustaining their lives. Joy and cheering, mourning and lamentation, anger and reconciliation are expressed in singing and music-making. The trust, comfort, and the confidence of the Christian faith with its belief in God's direction and guidance ultimately gives the choir its unique and heartfelt resonance. The liturgical year with its Sundays and festival days is not a relic of another age but an inspiring rhythm for the life of each choir member. The texts in the language of the past in harmony with the respective music of that era still speak today.

The mutual responsibility for each other and the sensitivity of each singer for the others are prerequisites for the best musical quality, and have a positive impact on dealing with everyday life in the Alumnat and in school. These are virtues that have a lasting effect on their life.

The St. Thomas Choir Leipzig, St. Thomas Church Leipzig, and St. Thomas School Leipzig are now eight centuries old, and the life lived with and for each other is passed on from one generation to another and preserved in the choir. In the future many boys and young men will derive inspiration from being a choir member, and those hearing the choir will be inspired by their singing.



With good wishes and cordial greetings, your

GOTTHOLD SCHWARZ

Thomaskantor



JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH AS THOMASKANTOR

Johann Sebastian Bach made a lasting impression on the St. Thomas Choir Leipzig. For almost three decades he lived as a city employee in the cantor's apartment of the St. Thomas School Leipzig directly adjacent to the St. Thomas Church Leipzig. The principal and cantor lived in the school building together with his students. Here in Leipzig, he wrote the most important part of his church music compositions, including the St. Matthew Passion, the Christmas-Oratorio and the Mass in B minor. The St. Thomas Choir Leipzig sang mainly in the two main churches in Leipzig, St. Nicholas and St. Thomas. For these Sunday services, Bach composed a new Cantata every week. As Director musices Bach was also responsible for the entire urban music in Leipzig.



BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY

The beginning of the long and unique tradition of the choir dates back more than 800 years. Starting with the Augustinian Canons ("Augustiner-Chorherren") in 1212 the choir experienced not only social change and upheaval, but was – and is valued even today – one of the oldest choirs in the world experiencing important societal events in the public sphere.

In the year 1212, a monastery of the Augustinian Canons was founded by a decree of the Margrave Dietrich von Meißen when Leipzig had just received its town and market charters. With the construction of the church dedicated to the apostle Thomas, a school was built at the same time, which was designated as schola exterior. St. Thomas School Leipzig was also open to children of Leipzig's citizens and is thus regarded as Germany's oldest public school. The boys and young men had to perform the liturgical music in the church setting in exchange for free board and lodge. Music, especially the musica sacra, was a very high priority in the medieval education. Seen as reflecting divine order, music played a very important role. The choir members, the so-called Thomaner, had from the outset the privilege and the obligation to sing at services such as baptisms, weddings, funerals as well as Council and University celebrations. They could rely on the St. Thomas School Leipzig for quality education, which could lead to university access.

At the beginning of the Reformation in Leipzig the St. Thomas School and its choir were placed under the patronage of the City in 1543. Thus, the choir is Leipzig's oldest cultural institution. Leipzig subsequently became an important center of music.

Many outstanding musicians have influenced the development of the choir as Thomaskantor and influenced the musical history of Protestant church music. They were not only important musicians and composers, but also important role models for the Thomaner. The 27-year lasting cantorship of Thomaskantor Johann Sebastian Bach made the most effective impression on Leipzig's musical history and also on the St. Thomas Choir Leipzig.

The choir and the music of Johann Sebastian Bach delight countless visitors to St. Thomas Church Leipzig. St. Thomas Choir Leipzig is regularly a guest in prestigious concert halls around the world. The young singers have captured the attention of an ever-widening audience through excellent performances and extraordinary professionalism.

St. Thomas Choir Leipzig is a musical Ambassador to the world and annually attracts many thousand guests from all over the world to Leipzig and to the famous St. Thomas Church Leipzig.

MILESTONE “800 YEARS OF THOMANA”: BELIEVING – SINGING – LEARNING

For more than 800 years, the Thomana trifecta has combined the three outstanding institutions of St. Thomas Church Leipzig, St. Thomas Choir Leipzig and St. Thomas School Leipzig. Despite societal upheavals and changes, this group of three with its original duties remains bound together to this day. “The real meaning of our actions is to perform church music in the best way to benefit the audience. If we lose the spiritual root, the artistic roots will die”, says Thomaskantor Gotthold Schwarz.

The celebration in 2012 of the 800-year-old existence of the Thomana continues on the traditional path and will develop and remain faithful to the motto “Believing – Singing – Learning”.

FAMOUS THOMASKANTORS

Georg Rhau opened the series of famous Thomaskantors. In his two-year term 1519 the dispute between Martin Luther and Johann Eck took place. Initially, the cantors changed often, however, Sethus Calvisius held the position for twenty years as Thomaskantor (1594–1615), followed by Johann Hermann Schein (1616–1630), Tobias Michael (1631–1657), Sebastian Knüpfer (1657–1676), Johann Schelle (1677–1701), Johann Kuhnau (1701–1722) and Johann Sebastian Bach (1723–1750). The inaugural cantata of Johann Sebastian Bach was heard on May 30, 1723. On June 1, 1723, the inaugural ceremony in the Office of Thomaskantor took place. He remained until his death in 1750. Then followed Gottlob Harrer (1750–1755), Johann Friedrich Doles (1756–1789), Johann Adam Hiller (1789–1800), August Eberhard Müller (1801–1810), Johann Gottfried Schicht (1810–1823), Christian Theodor Weinlig (1823–1842), Moritz Hauptmann (1842–1868), Ernst Friedrich Eduard Richter (1868–1879), Wilhelm Rust (1880–1892), Gustav Schreck (1893–1917), Karl Montgomery Rufus Siegfried Straube (1918–1939), Günther Ramin (1940–1956), Kurt Thomas (1957–1960), Erhard Mauersberger (1961–1972), Hans-Joachim Rotzsch (1972–1991), Georg Christoph Biller (1992–2015) and to the present Gotthold Schwarz.



MISSION STATEMENT OF THE THOMASKANTOR: SOLI DEO GLORIA

Daily rehearsals directed by the Thomaskantor form the centerpiece of life of the choir. Gotthold Schwarz, the 17th successor of Johann Sebastian Bach, sees the choir's main purpose in "Soli Deo Gloria", singing "to God alone be glory". Thus he consciously continues today, in the 21st century, the tradition of the choir's most famous Thomaskantor. Bach marked most of his works, as was customary at the time, with the abbreviation S.D.G. in place of his own name. In this way, he made it clear that he saw his work as praise to God and that he had composed his music to honor God.

The music sung by the choir traditionally forms an integral part of the liturgy, as well as biblical readings and prayer. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to Thomaskantor Gotthold Schwarz that every Thomaner understands the lyrics he sings: Explaining the importance of specific passages is a vital part of the rehearsals.

The young singers experience an intensive examination not only of the music but of the lyrics as well. Some of the choir members who come from non-Christian homes, experience a new sense of purpose, are baptized and later confirmed. Therefore, it is not unusual that these Thomaner find their way to faith through music.

THOMASKANTOR GOTTHOLD SCHWARZ

Gotthold Schwarz, born 1952 in Zwickau, was briefly a member of the St. Thomas Choir Leipzig in the 1960s. In the 1970s he received his church music education at the Hochschule für Kirchenmusik Dresden (University for Church Music Dresden) and at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater "Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy" Leipzig (University of Music and Theatre "Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy" Leipzig). In Leipzig he focused on voice and concluded his studies in conducting. He returned to the choir in 1979 as a voice trainer. In the 1990s, Gotthold Schwarz represented the Thomaskantor numerous times, and after the resignation of Thomaskantor Georg Christoph Biller in February 2015 he became acting Thomaskantor and in June 2016 was appointed the 17th Thomaskantor after Johann Sebastian Bach.

Early in his career, an extensive concert schedule as a singer led Gotthold Schwarz to the major European music centers as well as to Japan, Israel, Brazil, Argentina and the United States of America, where he gave Master Classes on Bach's works. As a soloist of the major works and "Lieder", as well as a conductor, he developed an extensive repertoire from the baroque to the modern period, which is evidenced by numerous recordings.



“In addition to the music, life in the Alumnat has many advantages: you can talk about the school, go into the city together, play football and make new friends.” DRAGAN, 14

EVERYDAY LIFE

Life in the so-called “Kasten” (“Box”), as the Thomaner refer to their Alumnat (i.e. boarding house), is a world unto itself. Here life revolves around music with everyday life taking place in extended and modernized buildings.

The central and most important place is the large rehearsal hall which can be used outside the choir rehearsals for individual musical activities like band rehearsals. Connected to the hall is the daylight-flooded dining room; a place where the singers come together three times a day to eat. However, the four-story house offers many more possibilities.

The living quarters of the Alumnat, the so-called “Stuben”, are similar to a suite with a large lounge area and several bedrooms, which are shared by up to three students of different ages. In addition to their own bed there is space for homework and personal interests, as well as sufficient space for gatherings, games and fun. Along with their own football field which is used for intramural tournaments, there is a sports hall, a gym and a sauna. But also for all those who are not inclined to sports, many other possibilities are available: the computer room, the play room with trains (that the engineering and tech-savvy boys enjoy), the study hall which offers space for completing homework, and the comfortably quiet reading room where they can devote time to reading their lessons. Another important activity is producing a special journal for the Thomaner called “Kasten-Journal”, the St. Thomas Choir Leipzig newspaper published regularly by the choir members and all are invited to make their own contributions. In addition, the teachers and educators offer to cook with them. For the older singers, the so-called “Pub” is a space for meetings.

The twice annual “Hausmusik” is organized by the Prefects and supported by the music educators. At these events the boys produce musical offerings also beyond the classical repertoire.

The educational staff is directly involved in the everyday life of the choir. There is a staff room for counseling on each floor and the staff is available around the clock. The teachers and educators are not only present everyday at meals, but also create close relationships with the boys and young men, support them in their school progress, and are available to them as caregivers.





“Of course, our priority each day is singing. But the diversity of instrumental training should not be underestimated.” MAX, 16

MUSICAL TRAINING

Sectional rehearsals usually precede the general choir rehearsal, where the young singers' tireless commitment is realized under the direction of the Thomaskantor, his musical assistant and also the Prefects. To achieve the distinctive sound of the vocal polyphony of Johann Sebastian Bach requires constant exercise. The singers are trained simultaneously to sing from sheet music, to be rhythmically precise, to watch the conductor for phrasing, dynamics and gestures so that the music will become alive.

Another core piece of the training is weekly private voice lessons by prestigious teachers for all the Thomaner (in adapted form during the period when the voice changes). Together with the Thomaskantor and his musical assistant, the voice teachers exchange experiences on a weekly basis regarding the development of the boys' voices and can respond immediately to the needs of each choir member.

In the Alumnat the singers receive weekly classes in piano by experienced music educators and music teachers. On request, other instruments can be learned, of which there are many excellent instruments available. There are sufficient possibilities throughout the Alumnat and Villa thomana next-door to practice.



“Already I’ve been with the choir in the Vatican,
in China and Israel, to name a few places.” TOBIAS, 13



SCHOOL EDUCATION

The school education of the Thomaner from grades 5 to 12 is the responsibility of the St. Thomas School Leipzig, a secondary school of the City of Leipzig, located across the street. The choir members learn with other students in mixed classes and graduate with an emphasis on music and performance. The youngest boys enter the choir at the beginning of

the 4th class. They are taught in special classes at the Anna-Magdalena-Bach-Schule, a primary school of the City of Leipzig, or at forum thomanum primary school (private school) directly on the campus.

YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION ONLINE:

www.thomasschule.de · www.amb-grundschule-leipzig.de · www.forum-thomanum.de



CONCERTS AND PUBLIC APPEARANCES

The musical arrangement of the motets, a musical form of worship in St. Thomas Church Leipzig on Friday evening and Saturday afternoon, as well as in Sunday worship is one of the core tasks of the St. Thomas Choir Leipzig. The preparations, which include also a Bach Cantata on Saturday, determine a large part of everyday life. The singers share and appreciate the wonderful feeling of attracting crowds of more than 2000 people a week with their music together with the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, vocal soloists, and the organist of the St. Thomas Church Leipzig.

The choir's performances in the St. Thomas Church Leipzig on high church holidays and also the annual performances of Bach's Passions, the Christmas-Oratorio and the Mass in B minor create a lasting impression. Also the choir traditionally opens the annual Leipzig Bach Festival in June each year.

The St. Thomas Choir Leipzig travels regularly to prestigious concert venues. Regional, nationwide and around the world the Thomaner inspire audiences with their variety of programs ranging from Gregorian chants to modern composers, as well as with their brilliant and distinctive interpretation of Bach's work. They remain highly regarded guest performers in the international music centers.

Through numerous audiovisual and other media productions the St. Thomas Choir Leipzig is able to be experienced outside of the concert hall.



RESPONSIBILITY FOR EACH OTHER

The common life in the Alumnat is characterized and strengthened by assigning a little responsibility to each individual student, involving not only singing and everyday choral chores, but every aspect of living together in the Alumnat.

The principle of shared responsibility has proven itself at St. Thomas Choir Leipzig for centuries and each Thomaner defends it fervently. As in a family, choir members of different ages live in dormitory rooms as if it were a second home. Together they celebrate their birthdays and make preparations for Christmas as well as exchange the latest computer games. In this atmosphere they easily find conversation partners to share their concerns in life, and not only for academic problems. The older Thomaner are responsible as mentors for the younger ones and assist them as counselors and caring listeners, because many of the concerns are familiar to them from their own experience.

Some Thomaner assume additional responsibilities. As Choir Prefects and Famuli they help in many areas of the choir, for example in rehearsals, in the organization of the sheet music, as well as the sale of programs, CDs, books and other

merchandise. Also those choristers whose voice is changing do not sing, but take up these tasks apart from singing until they are integrated back in the musical work of the choir with a new voice as a tenor or bass.

Basically there is a close collaboration in the education of the boys and young men with the parents and a partnership is forged between educators, parents and the Thomaskantor.

“As Cantor Famulus I take care of, among other things, the orchestra sheet music. I’m proud of working directly with the Thomaskantor and the employees of the Alumnat. I appreciate that I am trusted with such responsible and exciting work.” ALEXANDER, 17

ONCE A THOMANER, ALWAYS A THOMANER

At the center of life as a Thomaner is the community development of music and their regular performance at the St. Thomas Church Leipzig. Over time additional individual interests and talents emerge, which are also encouraged.

After the completion of their studies at St. Thomas School Leipzig, some graduates pursue music professionally. Some well-known a-cappella groups from the ranks of the choir have been formed in the last two decades. Famous orchestra conductors, singers, composers and musicians have emerged over the centuries from the St. Thomas Choir Leipzig and some became Thomaskantor, including Gotthold Schwarz who was also a member of the choir in the 1960s.

After years being together at school and forging intense friendships with each other, many former Thomaner remain connected after leaving choir and school. They visit the Alumnat and St. Thomas Church Leipzig or become active supporters and benefactors of “their” choir. They may join the several sponsoring groups: the Förderkreis Thomanerchor, the Stiftung Thomanerchor, the Thomanerbund or also forum thomanum Leipzig.

“I felt few things in my life so crucial as my time in the St. Thomas Choir Leipzig. Everyday life in the Alumnat and making music with the different generations of young choir members has made me what I am today.” LOUIS, 18



“Each week we sing sacred works by Johann Sebastian Bach. The double choirs are the most fun for me. You could say, Bach unites the choir.” **BENEDETTO, 11**

BECOMING A THOMANER

To become a Thomaner after passing the entrance exam and the appropriate musical preparation means first and foremost to find a second home away from home, even if that means spending a large part of the school year in the Alumnat. Life here is similar to a large family who lives in community and takes responsibility for each other. Every year in the summer the choir loses some of the tenor and bass voices as the graduates leave the choir and new singers are accepted with their soprano and alto voices. This change is always a new challenge. To keep the musical quality of the highest standard and to find talented young musicians, the St. Thomas Choir Leipzig cooperates closely with various local educational institutions. Employees of the emerging area visit several day-care centers in which they work on music with the preschool children. Talented young singers are then invited to “tryout” officially. These tryouts take place several

times a year. The day-care of the forum thomanum Leipzig is responsible for musical-language education in the pre-school age. The choir candidates are trained in close cooperation with the (private) forum thomanum primary school, as well as the Anna-Magdalena-Bach-Schule, a primary school of the City of Leipzig. With in-depth artistic training profiles, which include among others individual voice training, music lessons, choral singing and music theory, the aim of both schools is to prepare for its choir candidate step by step on an entrance exam in the choir. Joint appearances



of the young singers with the choir are unforgettable. Afterward, most of them can hardly wait until they can finally be a “real” Thomaner. Inclusion in the St. Thomas Choir Leipzig takes place usually at the beginning of the 4th class after having passed an entrance examination. The musical abilities as well as the educational level of performance are examined. The boys of class 4 are already an active part of the choir community. Their musical, educational and personal development is considered again after half a year.

The St. Thomas Choir Leipzig and the special learning opportunities in the Alumnat have a great attraction for parents and children outside of Leipzig. For anyone interested, the choir offers an annual “open house” for parents to see first-hand the Alumnat and learn about all that it has to offer. Get detailed information on recording conditions, the costs for parents and the various access and learning paths in separate brochures on demand in the Alumnat.

SUPPORTERS, SPONSORS AND PARTNERS

The St. Thomas Choir Leipzig, an institution of the City of Leipzig, maintains many long-standing partnerships: Special focus is on the weekly motets, which are performed in close collaboration with the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, the organist and pastors of St. Thomas Church Leipzig. Also it takes advantage of cooperating with the Leipzig Bach Archive and the music schools such as the Musikschule Leipzig “Johann Sebastian Bach” and the Hochschule für Musik und Theater “Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy” Leipzig (University of Music and Theatre “Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy” Leipzig). Cooperation with Prof. Dr. med. Michael Fuchs of the Phoniatics and Audiology at the Universitätsklinikum Leipzig (University Hospital Leipzig) is also an important building block for the work of the choir.

For its successful work, the St. Thomas Choir Leipzig whose basic equipment and costs are covered by the City of Leipzig, requires the support of committed funding institutions and individuals. The improvement of the living and learning conditions of the Thomaner is supported by the following institutions: forum thomanum Leipzig, Förderkreis Thomanerchor Leipzig, Stiftung Freise, Stiftung Thomanerchor, as well as Thomanerbund.

YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION ONLINE:

www.thomanerchor.de



CHOIR DIRECTION AND WORKFORCE

The care, training and organization of the St. Thomas Choir Leipzig does not happen by itself. Supporting the choir and its high level of performance, are the Thomaskantor and teaching staff, and an entire team of employees. They create the best possible conditions so that the singers can concentrate on work in many open spaces and with diverse leisure activities for comprehensive personal development.

Not only aspects of musical life ranging from researching and buying sheet music for the performance plans of the motets in the St. Thomas Church Leipzig but also planning concert tours and media productions for the future is designed by the staff of the administration. Important to mention are the maintenance of the Alumnat, the financial backing, and the tireless service of educational staff; all of which take care of the needs of the boys and young men.

The teachers and educators are present during homework time, create a wide range of activities and are available around the clock to serve as caregivers. The kitchen team prepares fresh meals daily in the Alumnat's own kitchen. The janitors are responsible for the care and maintenance of the indoor and outdoor area. A nurse is also available for the choir members

in the case of sickness and is a trustworthy contact person. And what would the singers be without a well-maintained concert suit or "Kieler Bluse"? To ensure their appearance a seamstress is needed.

In short, in addition to the musical work of the Thomaskantor and the entire musical structure, many committed people are needed to fulfill this great enterprise.



KIELER BLUSE

The introduction of the so-called „Kieler Bluse“ (Sailor Suit) as a concert suit for the boys who sing soprano and alto is a visual trademark of the St. Thomas Choir Leipzig and dates back to the 19th century. The special affinity of German Emperor Wilhelm II for the Navy was probably fashionable. Initially in the history of the choir, it was not the concert suit or school uniform. In some early photos, some Thomaner had on white shirts with black stripes, but the majority of them can be seen wearing black shirts with white stripes. At times the boys wore short pants and in cold weather long stockings. The tenor and bass voices performed in traditional dark suit and tie, as they do today.





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