

Johann Friedrich Fasch  
als Instrumentalkomponist

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Johann Friedrich Fasch's *Mich vom Stricke  
meiner Sünden* – a work for Zerbst?

Johann Friedrich Fasch proudly reports in his autobiography, that he composed a strong (“*starke*”) Passion in his first year in Zerbst<sup>1</sup> and, based upon this single piece of evidence, the date 1723 has generally been accepted as the year of composition for Fasch’s Passion oratorio *Mich vom Stricke meiner Sünden*.<sup>2</sup> That is, until 1997 when the completion of a major study of the Zerbst Passion tradition and of the *Zerbster Gesangsbücher* cast great doubt on this assumption.<sup>3</sup> In this paper I will examine the evidence that suggests that the work was not composed for Zerbst but was completed prior to Summer 1722.

- 1 Bernhard Engelke, *Johann Friedrich Fasch. Versuch einer Biographie*, in: Sammelbände der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft 10 (1908–9), pp. 263–283, p. 278: “Hier hatte ich gleich in dem ersten Kirchenjahre von 1722 bis 23 einen doppelten Jahrgang auf den Vor- und Nachmittag des Gottesdienstes zu componiren, daher bey jedem kleinen Festtage, der mir einfiel, ich selbige Woche 4 Kirchenstücke componirte; hierzu kam noch eine starke Passion und 3 Serenaten zu den hohen Geburtstagen.”
- 2 Bernhard Engelke, *Johann Friedrich Fasch. Sein Leben und seine Tätigkeit als Vokalkomponist*, Diss. Halle 1908, p. 46. The following sources reproduce Engelke’s assumption: Gottfried Küntzel, article *Johann Friedrich Fasch*, in: New Grove Dictionary, London 1980, vol. 6, p. 413–414; Paul Steinitz, *German Church Music, Passion Music*, in: New Oxford History of Music, vol. 5, Oxford 1975, pp. 620–658, here: p. 646; Gottfried Gille, *Zur Vokalmusik von Johann Friedrich Fasch. Übersicht und Überlieferung*, in: Johann Friedrich Fasch (1688–1758). Bericht über die wissenschaftliche Konferenz in Zerbst am 16. und 17. April 1988 aus Anlaß des 300. Geburtstages, part 1, Blankenburg/Harz 1989 (= Studien zur Aufführungspraxis und Interpretation von Instrumentalmusik des 18. Jahrhunderts 40), pp. 36–50, here: p. 42; Rüdiger Pfeiffer, *Johann Friedrich Fasch 1688–1758. Leben und Werk*, Wilhelmshaven 1994, pp. 111–2; Mary Térey-Smith, *The Chorale settings of the “Passio Jesu Christi” by Johann Friedrich Fasch*, in: Johann Friedrich Fasch und sein Wirken für Zerbst. Bericht über die internationale wissenschaftliche Konferenz am 18. und 19. April 1997 im Rahmen der 5. Internationalen Fasch-Festtage in Zerbst, ed. Internationale Fasch-Gesellschaft e.V., Dessau 1997 (= Fasch-Studien 6), pp. 114–135, here: p. 114. In fact, an earlier reference to Fasch’s Passion music gives a much more accurate assessment of his activity in this genre. Franz Preitz (n.d.), *Über die Kapellmeister und Organisten am Hochfürstlich Anhalt-Zerbstischen Hof im 18. Jahrhundert*, in: Das literarische Anhalt. Arbeiten zeitgenössischer Schriftsteller, ed. Jean Bernard Wuschl and Hermann Wäschke, Dessau [1888], pp. 177–181, p. 181, states that Fasch produced “*die große Passionsmusik*” in his first year and that later he produced “*ein Oratorium*” (presumably *Passio Jesu Christi: Mich vom Stricke meiner Sünden*) and “*mehrere passionsmusiken*”. Raymond Dittrich, *Die Brockes-Passion von Johann Friedrich Fasch*, in: Die Musikforschung 48 (1995), pp. 130–44, is more circumspect in his extended article on the work in which he makes comparisons with Telemann’s setting, suggesting a composition date sometime between 1723 and 1727. See discussion below.
- 3 Nigel Springthorpe, *Passion Composition and composers of Passion music associated with the Court of Anhalt-Zerbst*, PhD. diss., University of Surrey 1997, pp. 207–224, 225–228, 237, 252, 253–256, 415–6.

By the time of Fasch's appointment to Zerbst, the performance of liturgical Passions was already a well-established tradition in the Schlosskirche, one that had commenced in 1720 with a performance of a setting of St Matthew's gospel composed by Johann Baptist Kuch. Essentially, the Gospel text was set as four self-contained cantatas, each with their own key structure, framed by chorales, choruses or orchestral movements, and performed in four services over two days on Gründonnerstag and Karfreitag.

Kuch composed two further Passions following the same format in 1721 and 1722 based, in turn, on the Gospels of St Mark and St Luke. However, Kuch left in a hurry and under somewhat of a cloud sometime after Easter 1722, an event that made way for Fasch's appointment at the end of the Summer the same year. Fasch was no doubt briefed by the Archdeacon that, amongst the varied tasks and responsibilities he would have, it was expected of the new Kapellmeister to provide a new setting of a Passion based upon St John's text for Easter 1723. The court records confirm that, in addition to the double cantata cycle he composed for the first year, the cantatas for other feast days and music for "Geburtstage", Fasch did indeed provide a four-part setting of St John's Gospel following the established format and I believe it is to this work that Fasch refers in his autobiography. In 1724, Fasch appeared to take a rest by scheduling a "Passion Harmony" referred to in the court records as "*Passion aus den vier Evangelisten*", which as in the four previous years, was performed over the four services on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Unfortunately the work does not survive and it is not clear whether this Passion harmony was a new work composed by Fasch, a work he purchased from another source or, indeed, a "compilation" drawn from the works performed since 1720. The cycle of liturgical Passion performances established by Kuch and Fasch continued to 1767. At no point was *Mich vom Stricke meiner Sünden* performed in the services held in the Schlosskirche. Indeed there seems to have been no history of the performance of lyrical Passions in Zerbst at all.<sup>4</sup>

A brief examination of *Mich vom Stricke* demonstrates how it differs from the liturgical Passions that were the standard fare in the Schlosskirche.<sup>5</sup> The two sources in Leipzig and Chicago represent two quite different versions of the work.<sup>6</sup> The Leipzig source (which we will refer to as "L") was acquired by Carl Ferdinand Becker in 1834. Hans-Joachim Schulze believes that – unlike the three Fasch cantatas in the Becker collection, which can be definitely associated with the Breitkopf catalogue holdings,<sup>7</sup> "L" has nothing to do with the Breitkopf catalogue entry of 1770 and suggests that the

4 See Nigel Springthorpe, *The Zerbst Passion Tradition*, in: Johann Friedrich Fasch und sein Wirken für Zerbst. Bericht über die internationale wissenschaftliche Konferenz am 18. und 19. April 1997 im Rahmen der 5. Internationalen Fasch-Festtage in Zerbst, ed. Internationale Fasch-Gesellschaft e.V., Dessau 1997 (= Fasch-Studien 6), pp. 101–113, p. 111, note 22.

5 See Springthorpe, *Passion Composition* [see note 3], pp. 225–256 for a full discussion of the sources and the textural variations.

6 1) Leipziger Städtische Bibliothek, Slg. Becker III.2.54, entitled: *PASSIO JESU CHRISTI di mons Fasch [...]*

2) University of Chicago Library, Department of Special Collections, MS 1273, entitled: *Oratorium./del Sgr/Fasch [...]*.

7 Breitkopf-Katalog (1770): *Verzeichniss Musicalischer Werke, allein zur Praxis, sowohl zum Singen, als für alle Instrumente, welche nicht durch den Druck bekannt gemacht worden, in ihre gehörige Classen ordentlich eingetheilet; welche in richtigen Abschriften bey. Bernh. Christoph Breitkopf & Sohn in Leipzig, um beystehende Preise zu bekommen sind in Louis d'ors à 5 Thlr. Dritte Ausgabe, Leipzig, nach der Michaelmesse, 1770. "Fasch, Oratorium: Mich vom Stricke meiner Sünden, à 2Ob, 2Viol. Viola. S.A.T.B. e Contin. In Partitur. 2thl. In S[t]immen 2th 16gl."*

manuscript may have been acquired from the collection of the Leipzig scholar C. F. Michaelis (1770–1834).<sup>8</sup> The dating of “L” is difficult to determine since no information has come to light about Michaelis’ source. The scribe has not been identified but the watermark suggests the manuscript may have originated in Prussia.

A former owner of the Chicago source, (which we will call “C”) was Carl Ludwig Traugott Gläser (1747–1797) who was *Stadtkantor* and teacher at Weißenfels from 1771. Due to its title, it has been suggested that this source might be a copy that Gläser purchased from Breitkopf.<sup>9</sup> An alternative suggestion that has been made is that the manuscript is in Gläser’s own hand for use in his post at Weißenfels,<sup>10</sup> indicating the copy might have been made some fifty years after the work’s inception.

The master copy that Breitkopf held was evidently disposed of sometime around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century since the work is not listed in the sale of material in 1836.<sup>11</sup> The provenance of the extant scores suggests that these manuscripts were prepared by, or for, contemporary musicians who were responsible for performances over which it was unlikely that Fasch had direct control. Thus, the possibility that neither source represents the definitive version that Fasch performed, either in Greiz, Zerbst or elsewhere, cannot be ruled out since the significant number of textural differences could have been the result of other composers attempting to “improve” or “modernise” the music. However, if the significant variants between the two sources were to be ascribed to Fasch, then the comparison provides a valuable insight into the development of Fasch’s compositional style since similar revisions have been noted in other cantata works.<sup>12</sup>

For the oratorio *Mich vom Stricke* Fasch not only chose to set a considerably abridged version of Brockes’ poem *Der für die Sünde der Welt*, omitting more of the Brockes’ text than he included, but also made changes to the recitative and included five chorales and two arias to texts that are not in Brockes’ poem. Fasch reduced the large-scale oratorio in four parts down to a compact two-part structure. It seems significant

8 Hans-Joachim Schulze, *Johann-Friedrich-Fasch-Quellen in Leipziger Bibliotheken*, in: Johann Friedrich Fasch (1688–1758). Wissenschaftliche Konferenz in Zerbst am 5. Dezember 1983 aus Anlaß des 225. Todestages, ed. Kultur- und Forschungsstätte Michaelstein by Eitelfriedrich Thom, Blankenburg/Harz 1984 (= Studien zur Aufführungspraxis und Interpretation von Instrumentalmusik des 18. Jahrhunderts 24), pp. 86–88.

9 Gille, *Zur Vokalmusik* [see note 2], p. 49, note 31.

10 As suggested in the notes from the list of stock for sale prepared by J. & J. Lubrano and in Schulze, *Johann-Friedrich-Fasch-Quellen* [see note 8], p. 87.

11 Breitkopf-Katalog (1836): *Verzeichniss geschriebener und gedruckter Musikalien aller Gattungen, welche am 1. Juni 1836 und folgenden Tagen, Vormittags von 9–11 Uhr und Nachmittags von 3–5 Uhr von Breitkopf & Härtel in ihrem Geschäftslocale zu Leipzig unter Notariatshand gegen baare Zahlung in Preuss. Courant an den Meistbietenden verkauft werden sollen. Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig 1836*. The only passion setting available in the sale was Graun’s *Kommt her und schaut* (on p. 1). A further, though not conclusive, reason for believing neither extant source is directly connected with Breitkopf is the entry in the 1770 catalogue – both extant scores require flutes which are not specified in this listing. However, it cannot be ruled out that it is possible that Michaelis acquired the copy that Breitkopf disposed of in the period 1770–1830.

12 There are several examples of the reworking of movements from earlier compositions in Fasch’s cantata works included here movements in the St John Passion “Ich weiß du läßt mich Gnade finden” from cantata *Wir müssen alle offenbar werden* FWV D : W 8 and the reworking of the aria “Denkt doch nicht verstockte Seelen” from the same cantata as “Herr lass uns nicht im Glauben” in *Selig sind* FWV D : S 5. For comments about the reworking of movements see Gregory S. Johnston, *Self-Borrowing in Johann Friedrich Fasch’s Cantatas: “Die Starken bedürfen des Arztes nicht” and “Lobe den Herrn, meine Seele”*, in: Johann Friedrich Fasch und sein Wirken für Zerbst [see note 2], pp. 142–152.

that, apart from the addition of the concluding chorale to Part I, most of the deviations from Brockes' libretto occur in Part II. In the following table of items, the right-hand column indicates the correspondences with Telemann's setting of the complete Brockes text and which movements were new to *Mich vom Stricke*.

Table 1: *Mich vom Stricke meiner Sünden*. (Leipzig version – Becker III.2.54)

PART I				
			Key	Item no. in Telemann
1	Chorus	Mich vom Stricke meiner Sünden	Em	2
2	Recitative	Als Jesus nun zu Tische saße		3/4
3	Aria (S)	Der Gott, dem alle Himmelskreise	G	5
4	Recitative	Und bald hernach		6/7
5	Aria (S)	Gott selbst, der Brunnenquell alles Guten	G	8
6	Chorale	Ach, wie hungert mein Gemüte	G	9
7	Recitative	Drauf sagten sie dem Höchsten Dank		10/15
8	Aria (B)	Mein Vater!	Am	16
9	Recitative	Mich quält der Sünden schwere Last		*
10	Aria (T)	Sünder, schaut mit Furcht und Zagen	Em	19
11	Recitative	Die Pein vermehrte sich	G-C	20
12	Aria (T)	Brich mein Herz, zerfließ in Tränen	Cm	21
29#.	Chorale	Herr, lass dein bitter Leiden	Cm	*
PART II				
13	Chorale	Ein Lämmlein geht und trägt die Schuld	G	*
14	Recitative	Und Jesus ward zum Palast Caiphas'	Em-Bm	34
15	Chorale	Falsche Zeugnis, Hohn und Spott	G	*
16	Recitative	Die Nacht war kaum vorbei	Em-G	47
17	Aria (S)	Meine Laster sind die Stricke	Bm	48
18	Recitative	Wie nun Pilatus Jesum fragt		53
19	Aria (T)	Verwegene Rotte was fängest du an	D	*



20	Recitative	Wie man ihm nun genug Verspottung		83/89
21	Aria (S)	Hier erstarrt mein Herz und Blut	Am	90
22	Recitative	Sobald er nun gekreuzigt war		93
23	Chorale	O Menschenkind, nur deine Sünd'	Am	92
24	Recitative	Und um die neunte Stund'		97, 100-102
25	Chorale	Jesus gab man bitter Gall	F	*
26	Recitative	Hierauf rief Jesus laut mit ganzer Macht:		104, 105+110
27	Aria (T)	Ihr Augen weinet Blut	Dm	*
28	Chorale	Ich danke dir von Herzen	D	*

\* texts not in Brockes' poem *Der für die Sünde der Welt*

Table 2: Alternative order of movements in Chicago version (MS 1273)

11	Recitative	Die Pein vermehrte sich	G-C	20
12	Aria (T)	Brich mein Herz, zerfließ in Tränen	Cm	21
13	Chorale	Ein Lämmlein geht und trägt die Schuld	G	*
<i>PART II</i>				
14	Recitative	Und Jesus ward zum Palast Caiphas'	Em-Bm	34
15	Chorale	Falsche Zeugnis, Hohn und Spott	G	*
16	Recitative	Die Nacht war kaum vorbei	Em-G	47

The placement of the break is different between the two works (and we must assume "C" is the earlier version) and notes in "L" indicate that Part I of the Passion should be concluded with the fifth verse of "Wenn meine Sünd' mich kränken" which has been added as an appendix to the score in the same hand as the rest of the manuscript, and the chorale "Ein Lämmlein geht und trägt die Schuld" should open Part II. This gives the work a more conventional structure, typical of the 18<sup>th</sup> century central German liturgical Passion, where each part is normally framed by choral items.<sup>13</sup> The keys of items 19 and 13 also support this order of movement, which strengthens the structure of the work as a whole.

13 See Springthorpe, *Passion Composition* [see note 3], pp. 13-19 for a discussion of the macro-structure of 18<sup>th</sup>-century liturgical Passions.

Part I follows Brockes' libretto more or less completely; Fasch omits only six movements out of the first 21 in Brockes' poem. However, Fasch has been far more selective in Part II, utilising only 14 of the 78 remaining items of the original libretto, leaving a gap between items 19 and 20 which is the equivalent of some 30 items in Telemann's score. Some of the recitative has been compressed from the Brockes' original, whilst new recitative has been introduced and two new arias for tenor have been added (nos. 19 and 27). It is possible that these new texts and the text of the chorale "Falsche Zeugnis" are by Fasch himself.<sup>14</sup> The 22 arias sung by "Tochter Zion" and "Gläubige Seele" are allocated in the Handel and Telemann settings, as Brockes directs and tradition dictates, to the soprano voice.<sup>15</sup> There is only one alto aria in Brockes' libretto but Fasch chooses to use only those aria texts originally assigned to soprano, though re-assigning two *Tochter Zion* arias to tenor (nos. 10 and 12), a surprising decision since the sentiments expressed in "Brich mein Herz, zerfließ in Tränen" are traditionally associated with the female commentator. The resultant libretto concentrates on the narrative and omits much of the lyrical commentary. However, whereas the drama of the events is heightened by these omissions, Fasch, surprisingly, underplays the dramatic possibilities of the work, most noticeably in the crucifixion scene where Christ's words are all narrated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person.<sup>16</sup>

Fasch omits several crucial scenes entirely, including Peter's denial. What exists, therefore, is a work in scale much more appropriate for a provincial church, with much of the pietistic language toned down. A larger proportion of chorales than in Brockes original also suggests congregational participation. Lyrical Passions were not widely performed as part of the liturgy in the first decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century since many centres banned the performance of them in church outright.<sup>17</sup> Despite Fasch's re-workings of Brockes' text into a two-part version, without proof of performance in Greiz, it

14 Fasch is known to have written the lyrical texts and music of a birthday piece performed 29 October 1722, a birthday serenata, performed 9 August 1732 (the texts of both are reproduced in Engelke, *Johann Friedrich Fasch. Sein Leben* [see note 2], Anhang III), and the cantata cycle: *Geistliche Andachten über die Apostolischen Texte* (1727/28).

15 The apparent lack of alto arias in early Fasch cantatas, together with the appointment of the first alto soloist at Zerbst late in 1726 tends to add credibility to the view that the work was the product of 1723–27 as suggested by Dittrich, *Die Brockes-Passion* [see note 2], pp. 130–44. I believe that this argument can be discarded in the light of Fasch's choice of texts. Handel and Telemann assign the aria movements as follows:

	Solo aria/arioso sections				Ensemble arias		
	S	A	T	B	S/B	SSS	SAB
Handel	15	1	9	3	2	–	1
Telemann	22	1	15	2	2	1	–

16 Only three of Christ's utterance from the cross are included: "My God my God, why have you forsaken me," "I thirst" and "It is finished" – clearly this work cannot be the "Passion harmony" performed in Zerbst in 1724.

17 In Hamburg, Mattheson performed Hunold's *Die Blutige* and various settings of the "Brockes" Passion in the Dom, which was independent of the influence of the Hamburg Senate.

cannot be determined whether, without gospel text it would have been allowable in an Eastertide service there. In all likelihood, however, a performance as a “sacred concert” would have been acceptable.<sup>18</sup>

I would like now to address the musical differences between the two sources. The orchestration of both versions is modest but, the “earlier” version “C” is much more lightly scored. Two oboes in “L” replace the flute in “C” in the opening chorus, whilst *obbligato* wind instruments are added in “L” to two other movements.

Table 3: Instrumentation of the sources

Item no.		Chicago (MS1273)	Leipzig (III.2.54)
1	Chorus	à 4: flute and strings	à 4: 2 oboes and strings
3	Aria (S)	à 3: vln 1+2, bc	à 3: vln 1+2, bc
5	Aria (S)	à 3: vln 1+2, bc	à 3: vln 1+2, bc
8	Aria (B)	à 2: unison violins and violas, bc	à 2: unison violins and violas, bc
10	Aria (T)	bc	bc
12	Aria (T)	à 5: oboe and pizz. strings	à 5: oboe and pizz. strings
17	Aria (S)	à 4: strings	à 4: flute and strings
19	Aria (T)	à 4: strings	à 4: (?2)oboe(s) and strings
21	Aria (S)	à 5: oboe and strings	à 5: oboe and strings
27	Aria (T)	à 3: 2 oboes and bc	à 3: 2 oboes and bc

A four-part string group is used in both sources in the opening chorus and in four of the nine arias. Notable is the use of wind instruments; Fasch is clearly aware of the colouristic effects that can be achieved with this group of instruments. In No. 27, “Ihr Augen weinet Blut” the solo tenor is accompanied by a three-part texture of two oboes and basso continuo, a combination which appears to be unique in Fasch’s (known) output.<sup>19</sup> Of particular interest is the instruction in “C” to mute the oboes at the beginning of this aria. Muting is not unknown in the period 1717–1720 and, in this instance, the toning down of the stridency of the oboes reflects the references to the dead Prince (Son of God) and to the remorse expressed by the commentator.<sup>20</sup> In No. 8, “Mein Vater!”

18 Oratorio passions were introduced into central German centres later than in the North – Leipzig only instituted its own annual tradition in 1721, though there is evidence of performances of Passions in the Neukirche by 1717, and possibly earlier. (See Springthorpe, *Passion Composition* [see note 3], pp. 8–11).

19 Brian Clark in a letter to the author, dated 4 June 1997.

20 Muting was achieved either by the application of paper or wool pushed into the bell or by purpose-made pear-shaped objects made of solid wood jammed into the bell-mouth. According to Anthony Baines, *Woodwind instruments and their history*, London 1967, reprinted New York 1991, p. 285, these manufactured mutes are surprisingly effective, “making the oboe whimper most pathetically”. A clear parallel can be seen in the aria “Lasset mich ihn nur noch einmal küssen” from the entombment scene in the anonymous St Luke Passion (BWV 246), itself most probably a contemporary work to *Mich vom Stricke meiner Sünden*. Here, in the manner of a chorale fantasia, the strings (marked “con molto lamento”) rest intermittently to allow the four-piece double-reed group (2 oboes, taille and bassoon), marked “piano, und

there is only a two-part texture with violins unison with violas over the basso continuo, a combination which, lasting the duration of an entire aria movement, again appears unique in Fasch's output.<sup>21</sup> I believe that these two unusual features add weight to the argument that *Mich vom Stricke* predates the surviving sacred music, all of which was produced after 1723.

A further and most important difference between the two sources is the enrichment of the instrumental accompaniment in "L", which is achieved in four ways:

- 1) the elaboration of the 1<sup>st</sup> violin part at many points,
- 2) the accompaniment is filled out with added parts in the upper strings in passages where the vocal part is supported by the basso continuo only,
- 3) the inner parts have been filled out to create more continuous accompaniments where they are missing in the earlier version,
- 4) textural details such as ties, slurs and individual notes vary between sources.

Let us examine an example of each of these:

1) Elaboration of the 1<sup>st</sup> violin part

Example 1: J. F. Fasch, *Mich vom Stricke*, No. 1 (chorus), comparison of bb. 5–11

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system shows measures 5-7. The second system shows measures 8-10. The third system shows measures 11-13. The top staff is for Flute and Violin I (Chicago), the middle for Violin I (Leipzig), and the bottom for Soprano. The lyrics are written below the vocal line. The Chicago version includes many sixteenth-note passages in the violin parts, while the Leipzig version has a simpler accompaniment. The vocal line is identical in both versions.

Here there is a rather dramatic variance. The strings parts are strictly *colla voce* in "C". In "L" the wind instruments, viola and bass are *colla voce* while the violins perform more idiomatic and elaborate accompaniment patterns.

*zwar die Hoboen mit papier gedämpft*", to come through playing the tune "Derselbe mein Herr Jesus Christ, vor all' mein Sünd' gestorben ist".

21 Brian Clark in a letter to the author, dated 4 June 1997 – though there are two mass movements with sections like this.

2) Addition of upper parts to basso continuo accompaniments

Example 2: J. F. Fasch, *Mich vom Stricke*, No. 8 (aria), comparison of bb. 37–45

(Largo)

40

Bass  
Mein Her - ze bricht und mei - ne See - le be - trü - bet

Vln and Va unis  
**Chicago**

Continuo

Change in melody and harmony

Vln and Vla unis  
**Leipzig**

Continuo

Addition of accompaniment figuration

45

Bass.  
sich biß in den Tod, biß in den Tod

Vn and Va  
**Chicago**

Cont.

Vn and Va  
**Leipzig**

Cont.

Bass.

Vn and Va  
**Chicago**

Cont.

Vn and Va  
**Leipzig**

Cont.

Added accompaniment figuration

In the case of No. 8, the addition of the unison violins and violas has necessitated the modification of the bass part. Note also the change of bass note in bar 38.

3) Inner parts filled out to create more flowing accompaniments and simpler accompaniments elaborated

Example 3: J. F. Fasch, *Mich vom Stricke*, No. 21 (aria), comparison of bb. 12–14

The image shows a comparison of two versions of the aria 'Mich vom Stricke' by J. F. Fasch, measures 12-14. The top system is labeled 'Chicago' and the bottom system is labeled 'Leipzig'. Both systems start with '12 (Largo)'. The Chicago version includes parts for Oboe, Soprano, Vn I, II and Viola, and Basso cont. The Leipzig version includes parts for Oboe, Vn I, II, Viola, and Basso cont. The Soprano part in the Chicago version has the lyrics 'Him - mel! was wolt ihr be - gin - nen?'. The Leipzig version has a more active accompaniment in the upper strings (Vn I, II and Viola) compared to the Chicago version.

The addition of music to upper strings can have the effect of creating both a more flowing accompaniment as well as a fuller and more even texture.

4) Textural differences

Minor textural differences have already been highlighted however textural changes are not limited to the accompaniments. In the two following examples, there are changes to the solo vocal lines where the intention is clearly to make the music more expressive. In the first, the abandonment of the second syllable of the word "Hertz[e]" has resulted in the addition of a sighing figure:

Example 4: J. F. Fasch, *Mich vom Stricke*, No. 12 (aria), comparison of b. 11

The image shows a comparison of two versions of the aria 'Mich vom Stricke' by J. F. Fasch, measure 11. The top system is labeled 'Tenor (Chicago)' and the bottom system is labeled 'Tenor (Leipzig)'. Both systems start with 'bar 11'. The Chicago version has the lyrics 'Brich mein Hert - ze' and a melodic line with a sharp upward inflection on 'Hert'. The Leipzig version has the lyrics 'Brich mein - Hertz' and a melodic line with a more gradual, sighing descent on 'Hertz'.

In the second the vocal line has been recast and re-harmonized for a few bars.

Example 5: J. F. Fasch, *Mich vom Stricke*, No. 21 (aria), comparison of bb. 20–21

The image shows a comparison of two versions of the aria 'Mich vom Stricke' by Johann Friedrich Fasch, specifically measures 20 and 21. The top half is labeled 'Chicago' and the bottom half 'Leipzig'. Both versions feature a Soprano vocal line, Violin I, II and viola, and Continuo accompaniment. The lyrics are: 'dürft ihr Hund', und Teu - fel wa - gen Got - tes Sohn ans Kreuz zu schla - gen'. In the Chicago version, the vocal line and continuo are shown. In the Leipzig version, the vocal line is recast, and the continuo has 'added accompaniment detail' (indicated by a box and arrow) and 'reharmonisation' (indicated by a bracket). A dashed line separates the two versions, with the text 'Change to melodic line' and an arrow pointing to the Leipzig vocal line.

Perhaps the most compelling evidence of a composition date prior to 1722 is the form of the chorales in *Mich vom Stricke meiner Sünden*. Since versions of the melodies of chorales varied from centre to centre, they can often give an indication of the centre for which particular cantata works were sung as part of the liturgy – composers tended to employ versions of the hymn melodies that were familiar to the local congregation. In the case of Zerbst, the titles of both the *Gesangbücher*<sup>22</sup> and the *Cantional*<sup>23</sup> indicate that the collection of hymns was created “upon the decree of the Prince” and represented the version of the chorales, both text and music, that was acceptable for use in the Schlosskirche and other churches in Anhalt-Zerbst.<sup>24</sup> In the cantatas written in the

22 Copies of *Zerbster Gesangbücher* published in 1705, 1707, 1730, 1743, 1748, 1753, 1755, 1757, 1759 and 1760 survive. See Springthorpe, *Passion Composition* [see note 3], for full titles and sources.

23 *Hochfürst[liches] Anhalt-Zerbstisches / Schloß=Kirchen Cantional / nach welchen in diesem Cantional / befindlichen melodien die Lieder, so / in [im] Zerbstischen Gesang-Buch enthalten, / auf Hochfürstlich genädigste verordnung / in Hochfürstlicher Schloß-Kirche / müs=sen gespielet und gesun=gen werden. / Anno 1738* (D-LHASA, DE, Zerbster Musikalien A33).

24 Térey-Smith, *The Chorale settings* [see note 2], p. 117, refers to Fasch’s tendency of “*applying seldom used published church poetry to melodies for worship in Zerbst*” displayed by the choice of chorales in *Mich vom Stricke meiner Sünden*. It is worth clarifying that the Zerbst *Gesangbücher* were used in churches throughout Anhalt-Zerbst. Also, the choice of hymns sung in the services in which the Passions were performed in the *Schlosskirche* was most consistent with a fixed pattern of the same chorales sung each year. Similarly, the chorales included in the Passions would have become most familiar to the congregation as each Passion was repeated in the cycle. (See Springthorpe, *Passion Composition* [see note 3], pp. 174–179).

earliest years of Fasch's employment in Zerbst, the chorale settings follow very closely indeed the version found in the *Cantional*, a point recognised by Barbara Reul in her study of the Fasch cantatas.<sup>25</sup> While the surviving *Cantional* was prepared in 1738, clearly an earlier version must have existed.<sup>26</sup> In a selection of seven cantatas composed by Fasch in the 1720s and early 1730s, (including one from his first year of office) the melody and, in the main, the bass lines of the chorales are identical note for note with the versions in the *Cantional*.<sup>27</sup> Apart from the replacement of the pause by a rest at fermatas and the addition of occasional passing notes, Barbara Reul found a similar concordance in the cantatas in the Berlin collection. One also finds a similar concordance in the chorale melodies of the Zerbst St Luke Passion (1722) (by Kuch/Fasch) and the Röllig St Mark Passion (1750) as well as in the Röllig cantatas.<sup>28</sup>

In *Mich vom Stricke* we find that not only is there one hymn text which is absent from the *Zerbster Gesangbuch* altogether (No. 15 "Falsche Zeugnis, Hohn und Spott") but there is also variance from the *Cantional* in all but one of the chorale melodies some of which can be seen in the following examples:

Example 6: *Mich vom Stricke* No. 6 / Zerbst *Cantional* No. 123

- 25 Barbara Reul, *The Sacred Cantatas of Johann Friedrich Fasch (1688–1758)*, PhD. diss., University of Victoria 1996, pp. 103–106 and pp. 203–206.
- 26 In c1720 the *Zerbster Gesangbuch* was increased from 405 to 505 hymns. In 1713 it was increased again to 511 and the 1743 edition adds two further hymns. The 1738 *Cantional* has tunes for 514 hymns. These 514 hymn tunes in the *Cantional* also provided all the music required for the 1262 hymns contained in the *Neuvermehrtes Zerbstisches Gesangbuch* introduced in 1753. It appears that the *Cantional* was added to in advance of the expansion of the Hymnbook. (See Springthorpe, *Passion Composition* [see note 3], pp. 196–206.)
- 27 Relationship of chorale setting to the version in the *Cantional* (ZG = 1720–1748 *Zerbster Gesangbuch*)  
*Wir müssen alle offenbar werden* FWV D : W 8 (1722); melody and bass line identical to ZG No. 349  
*Niemand kennet den Sohn* FWV D : N 2; melody identical to ZG No. 212  
*In der Welt habt ihr Angst* FWVD : I 8; melody and bass line identical to ZG No. 328  
*Bewahre deinen Fuß* FWV D : B 1 (c1735) No. 4 melody and bass line identical to ZG No. 501  
*Bewahre deinen Fuß* FWV D : B 1 (c1735) No. 8; melody identical to ZG No. 208  
*Gott, wir warten deiner Güte* FWV D : G 10; melody identical to ZG No. 195  
*Selig sind* FWV D : S 5; melody and bass line identical to ZG No. 287
- 28 Térey-Smith, *The Chorale settings* [see note 2], p. 120–127, compares the forms of the Chorales in *Mich vom Stricke meiner Sünden* with Handel's version in his setting *Der für die Sünde der Welt* and those in *Zahn* (which represent often the original version of the melodies) rather than with the forms as published in the *Zerbst Cantional*.



The image displays a musical score for 'Mich vom Stricke meiner Sünden' in G major, 3/4 time. It is divided into three sections:

- (a)**: Measures 11-16. The melody in the upper voice features a sequence of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note bass line in the left hand and a chordal accompaniment in the right hand.
- (b)**: Measures 17-22. This section shows a reharmonisation of the melody. The right hand accompaniment changes to a more active, sixteenth-note pattern, while the left hand continues with eighth notes.
- (c)**: Measures 23-28. The melody returns to the original eighth-note sequence. The accompaniment also returns to the original texture, with a steady eighth-note bass line and a simple chordal accompaniment.

Arrows point from the text "Changes to melody and reharmonisations" to the boundaries of sections (a), (b), and (c).

Example 7: *Mich vom Stricke* No. 23 / *Zerbst Cantional* No. 60

This example compares the original 'Zerbst Cantional No. 60' (top system) with 'Mich vom Stricke No. 23' (middle system). The top system shows the original cantional with a simple melody and accompaniment. The middle system shows 'Mich vom Stricke' with a more complex, ornamented melody and a more active accompaniment. The bottom system shows the original cantional again, but with a different accompaniment texture, possibly representing a different version or a specific performance practice. A box highlights the first measure of the melody in both the original and the 'Mich vom Stricke' version, showing the initial G4 note.

Example 8: *Mich vom Stricke* No. 28 / *Zerbst Cantional* No. 337

Zerbst Cantional No. 337 (transposed)

*Mich vom Stricke* No. 28

16

Change in melody

(a)

(b)

25

30

Example 9: *Mich vom Stricke* No. 29 / *Zerbst Cantional* No. 43

Zerbst Cantional No. 43

*Mich Vom Stricke* No. 29

10

Cant.

*Mich vom Stricke*

(a)

18

Cant.

*Mich vom Stricke*

(b)

In a survey of the surviving Zerbst liturgical Passions and *Mich vom Stricke meiner Sünden*, chorales have been placed in categories depending on the closeness of the version in the oratorio to that found in the *Cantional*. Those in categories 1 and 2, are close enough to the *Cantional* to be considered part of the Zerbst tradition, while those in category 3 show enough variation to be considered to have originated from another centre. Expressed in tabular form, not only is the relationship of the three Zerbst liturgical Passions and the Zerbst *Cantional* clear, but also the extent of the variance of the *Mich vom Stricke meiner Sünden* chorales from the *Cantional*:

Table 4: Tabular summary of the Passion chorale melodies

Category	<i>Mich vom Stricke</i>	St Luke c1722–1728	St John 1748	St Mark 1750
1 Identical to <i>Cantional</i> in melody and bass	–	5	9, 36, 44, 50, 56	9, 18
2 Melody identical, harmonic variation	13	4, 6, 8, 10	3, 10, 16, 17, 20, 23, 26, 39, 40, 49, 52	5 (abridged), 10, 19, 22, 30
3 Melodic variation, harmonic variation	6, 15, 23, 28, 29	2, 12	1, 32	–

Of six chorales (nos. 15 and 25 being the same melody), not one follows the harmonization of the Zerbst *Cantional*; only one has a melody identical to the version in the *Cantional* and five are sufficiently different to be considered as originating from another source. Table 4 also indicates a clear pattern: the oldest “pre-Zerbst” Passion has the most variants, the two *Zerbster Concert=Stube*<sup>29</sup> works, both by Fasch, demonstrate fewer variants, while the most recent work, by Röllig has the fewest.

That is not all. Not only are the chorales of the Zerbst oratorio Passions nearer to the forms found in the *Cantional* than are in *Mich vom Stricke*, but also they are more often in the same key. Expressed as a percentage the difference between the Zerbst liturgical Passions and *Mich vom Stricke* is quite marked:

Table 5: Proportion of chorales in same key as the *Cantional*<sup>30</sup>

St Luke	62%
St John	65%
St Mark	63%
“ <i>Mich vom Stricke</i> ”	28%

<sup>29</sup> *Concert=Stube des Zerbster Schlosses, Inventarverzeichnis aufgestellt im März 1743*; faksimile, ed. Kultur- und Forschungsstätte Michaelstein by Eitelfriedrich Thom, Michaelstein/Blankenburg (Harz) 1983 (= Studien zur Aufführungspraxis und Interpretation der Musik des 18. Jahrhunderts: Dokumentationen, Reprints 4).

<sup>30</sup> Springthorpe, *Passion Composition* [see note 3], p. 222.

In the light of such close concordance between chorale melodies of Fasch cantatas and the *Cantional*, the large amount of variance displayed in the chorales of *Mich vom Stricke* indicates that the work was not composed whilst Fasch was in Zerbst.

Why Fasch set this famous lyrical text is not certain. It could be argued that an abridgement of the Brockes libretto is an indication of a hurried preparation due, perhaps, to limited time available to complete the project, as Fasch had suggested was the case in the period October 1722–March 1723. Or, is it the case that Fasch had such limited resources at the time of composition that he could not contemplate a full setting? Before he enjoyed the relative affluence that the Court of Zerbst could afford, Fasch only had the opportunity to compose Lutheran works for the much more straightened circumstances of a city church. There is no doubt that Fasch could have come across a copy of the libretto of *Der für die Sünde der Welt* by c1720. The first performance of Keiser's setting was in Hamburg in 1712, and Telemann and Handel produced their versions in Frankfurt and London in 1716. Each of these three settings and another by Mattheson received performances between 1718 and 1719 in Hamburg, by which time many copies of the libretto, in several editions, were circulating in Germany.<sup>31</sup> One must presume that after his study tours of 1712–1714 Fasch continued to compose despite not yet finding a *Kapellmeistership*. In his time in Greiz from 1719 he undoubtedly composed church music since a set of cantatas was published in this period.<sup>32</sup> The modest forces required to mount a performance of *Mich vom Stricke* (2 oboes, one doubling flute, strings and continuo) were certainly available to him at this time. Pfeiffer confirms that he could call upon some trained musicians. In addition to some *Stadtmusici* and *Kirchner* are the following named players:<sup>33</sup>

Table 6: Named players available to J. F. Fasch in Greiz<sup>34</sup>

<i>Obergreizer Stadtpfeifer</i>	Johann Nicolaus Erhard
<i>Untergreizer Stadtpfeifer</i>	Johann Nicolaus Gau
<i>Kantor</i>	Georg Wilhelm Hamleben
<i>Musikus</i>	Mann
<i>Kammerdiener und Hofmusicus</i>	Andreas Ernst Degen (oboe, violin and cello)
<i>Kammerdiener und Hofmusicus</i>	Christoph Matthäus Schneider (oboe and violin)

31 An unusual version of the text of *Der für die Sünde der Welt* in five acts with 16 chorales was circulating in Zerbst in this period. A latin/german text was published in 1725 entitled:

*Die allgemeine / Welt=Erlösung / oder / die Geschichte von dem bittern / Leiden und Sterben / unsers / HERRN JESU Christi / von einem vornehmen Mitgliede der / Fruchtbringenden Gesellschaft ehemahls / in Lateinischer gebundener Rede vorgestellt / Und um ihrer Vortrefflichkeit willen / ins Teutsche übersetzt / durch / Rudolph Friedrichen von Schult / Weyl. Hoch=Fürstl. Hessen-Darmstädtischen / Regierungs=Rath. / ... noch beygefügt ein / ORATORIUM / über das Leiden Christi / von dem berühmten Hn. L. Brockes // ZERBST/ bey George Wilhelm Göckingen / 1725 (in D-Gs, 8 poet lat rec. II. 3833). Fasch may have been aware of this publication, though it bears little resemblance to *Mich vom Stricke meiner Sünden*.*

32 Pfeiffer, *Johann Friedrich Fasch* [see note 2], pp. 30–32. There are records of several payments to Fasch for the provision of compositions.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

34 Springthorpe, *Passion Composition* [see note 3], p. 222.

Other musicians also passed through Greiz, including fellow Leipzig students Johann Oßwald Fickweiler (who was an oboist), Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel and in 1721, Johann Gottfried Vogler.<sup>35</sup> No doubt Fasch would also have played violin himself and might have had some talented private violin pupils.

It cannot be ruled out that Fasch might have staged a performance of *Mich vom Stricke*, a setting of what was by then the most well-known and widely performed Lutheran Passion text whilst he was in the employ of the Graf Morzin (1721–1722) since he had use of a particularly fine orchestra of 10–12 players praised by Vivaldi. However, it was unlikely that the work was composed in this period since there seems to have been no chapel attached to what was, in fact, a Catholic Court.

One might assume that there was not a great market in circulating such an incomplete work for financial reward, supporting the theory that *Mich vom Stricke* was composed for Fasch's own sphere of activity. Whether the newer more fully orchestrated version represented in "L" was created purely for Fasch's own consumption or whether the submission of a score to Breitkopf was the catalyst for the changes may never be fully established. In the end though, the existence of two differing sources, neither with a direct connection to the composer, together with a listing in the 1770 Breitkopf catalogue, confirms that the work did enjoy some success further afield.

So, to conclude: the widely accepted date for the composition of *Mich vom Stricke meiner Sünden* is based upon Fasch's own comments on the "strong" passion that he composed in his first year of office. The apparent lack of alto arias in early Fasch cantatas, together with the appointment of the first male alto soloist late in 1726 has been cited as an indicator that the work was the product of the period 1723–27.<sup>36</sup> Against this circumstantial evidence comes the evidence of the court records and of the music itself. Not only is it clear from the *Verzeichnis*<sup>37</sup> that no performance of *Mich vom Stricke* took place in the Zerbst Schlosskirche as part of the liturgy, but also the very structure of the work is contrary to Zerbst liturgical Passion tradition. Mention has been made of the compositional load that Fasch undertook in his first year; already composing up to four cantatas in weeks with a feast day, would Fasch have had the will, let alone the sheer stamina, to compose two Passions in his six months in office? It is not inconceivable that the work was given a concert performance, though no evidence of the performance of oratorio works in sacred concerts has yet come to light. However, with the performance of a liturgical passion over four services in one week, would there have been an opportunity or the will on the part of the Court to hear yet a further version of the Passion story as a "sacred concert" leading up to Easter. We can also point to early features of Fasch's compositional style, some of which are apparently unique to his choral *œuvre*. Most compelling, however, is the evidence of the chorale melodies, which display marked variance to the forms used by Fasch at the commencement of his *Kapellmeistership* in Zerbst.

35 Pfeiffer, *Johann Friedrich Fasch* [see note 2], p. 30.

36 Dittrich, *Die Brockes-Passion* [see note 2], pp. 131–2.

37 *Verzeichnis, wie es mit dem Gottesdienst in der Schlosskirche gehalten wird*, D-LHASA, DE, Konsistorium ZE, IXa, Nr. 363–375.

So, returning to the opening question: *Mich vom Stricke meiner Sünden* – a work for Zerst? Was the work performed in the Zerst liturgy? – certainly not. Was it composed in 1723? – again I believe we can conclude certainly not. Was *Mich vom Stricke meiner Sünden* originally composed for Zerst? – I believe it is inconceivable that Fasch did not oversee a performance of the work. In the light of the evidence, <sup>circumstantial</sup> as some of it might appear, I believe it is very unlikely he did so in Zerst, a performance in Greiz in 1719–1720 appears to be the most logical conclusion.