

1. Criticizing Ahle:
2. *Contextualizing, Editing, and Performing the Music of Johan Rudolph Ahle (1625-1673)*
3. Research question:

How can I create a performer-friendly critical edition of printed music from seventeenth century Germany, and what impact does the act of creating an edition have on my performance?

4. A brief description:

Margaret Bent, in an article published in 2008 writes, rather bluntly, that “all modern transcriptions unavoidably involve compromise.”¹ She goes on to state that “editions intended to serve both scholars and performers...have often resulted in compromises which satisfy neither constituency.”² This is not a new assessment – in the 1920’s Rudolph von Ficker was already suggesting editions be divided into performance and scholarly versions.³ While both largely focused their careers on fifteenth century music, this nonetheless displays a prevalent attitude – that the requirements of a scholar and of a performer are so different that an edition cannot accommodate both. In seventeenth century music, the compromises become fewer, and my goal is to see how close I can get to an edition which can be pleasing to both constituencies. In order to undertake the research of this nature, I have elected to focus on Johann Rudolph Ahle (1625-1673), and specifically a collection he published in Mühlhausen in 1658. I will create a critical edition of the entire collection (thirty pieces in all), complete with details on my editorial method, as well as a study of the music and its context.

*Ahle is an interesting figure to look in to – aside from a few independently published pieces and a 1901 volume of *Denkmäler deutscher Tonkunst*, his work remains largely unedited and unknown (of the collection I’m working with, for instance, only six of the thirty pieces have been published, in editions of varying reliability). I’m interested in how editorial practices can influence performance, and Ahle is an intriguing figure. Not only would a new edition make the music more easily accessible, the scarcity of modern editions provides an opportunity to raise basic questions about editing music without modern publication history.*

I also find Ahle’s music worthy of further study – while Friedrich Blume dismisses it as “of inferior quality” and goes on to blame for a popularization which “was the beginning of a Philistine laziness,”⁴ my examination of a few pieces has found an expressive model that I view as a bridge between Schütz and Bach (who would appear in Mühlhausen thirty-five years after Ahle).

Over the next year and a half, I will take a two-fold approach – the first directly through the music. I will finish the edition, and use it for performances, have it evaluated by both scholars and performers, and continue to adjust as necessary. I will continue to document my experience using my own editions, and the way that changes my relationship with the music, as well as the difference editions can make in how other performers react. The second path I will follow is the more “academic” – reading current scholarship Ahle, on editing, and on mid seventeenth century music in Thuringia. This will both impact my edition of the music, as well as my performance.

¹ Margaret Bent, “Early Music Editing, Forty Years On: Principles, Techniques, and Future Directions,” in *Early Music Editing*, ed. Theodor Dumitrescu et al. (Turnhout: Belgium, 2008), 250.

² Ibid, 255.

³ Andrea Lindmayer-Brandl, “Early Editions of Early Music,” in *Early Music Editing*, 94.

⁴ Friedrich Blume, *Protestant Church Music: A History* (London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd.: 1975), 231-232.

5. Chosen form of documentation:

My final product will consist of a complete edition of Ahle's 1658 Neu Gepflanzter thüringischer Lustgarten, as well as a written thesis – a possible structure of which is outlined below:

Part I: The Edition

1. Early Music Editing (overview of scholarship from John Caldwell: Editing Early Music (1985) to today)
2. Editorial History of Johann Ahle (DDT 1901 to today)
3. Relevance: why is a new edition needed, and what is to be gained from exploring the process?
4. The Process (my journey with Ahle, Jan. 2015 to present)
5. What I learned in The Process, about editing and performance

Part II: The Music

6. Johann Ahle in the context of (ie why he matters):
 - a. Music in Thuringia in the seventeenth century
 - b. Lutheran Music in the mid-baroque
 - c. A predecessor to Bach
7. Instrumentation in the 1658 collection – why is it interesting?
8. Text sources – Chorales, Bible, and...Catholic Prayer Books?!
9. Performance implications of the academic research

I hope to also give a lecture/recital type performance of this music as a final product of my research.

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