

## 69 2-part pieces from the "Schemelli Songbook"

Ear-training and sight-singing as presently taught in most music schools and universities normally (and necessarily) emphasize exam-related problems -- identifying triads, intervals, singing uninspiring melodies -- which never quite find their way back to the experience of dealing with actual repertoire. In my view, there is a real need, shared by teachers and students, for a body of instructional material more closely linked to musical literature. This edition is intended to address this need, in however small a way.

The collection consists of the sixty-nine pieces (BWV 439-507) prepared by J.S. Bach for the 1736 publication of G.C. Schemelli's "Musikalisches-Gesangbuch" or the "Schemelli Songbook". For the most part, Bach was working as an arranger: since the majority of the melodies were already in existence, his principle task was to add a bass line to each one -- some with figures, others without. The precise nature of Bach's involvement is not known -- it is possible, for instance, that he altered certain melodic details so as to render the tunes more suited to his harmonic language. As passed down to us by Bach, these 2-part miniatures offer not only numerous superb melodies, but also one demonstration after another of Bach's contrapuntal and harmonic mastery. Stylistically, the pieces are somewhat related to the four-part chorales, which have long served as the cornerstone for the study of harmony. The main difference is that the melodies in the Schemelli collection are more expansive than the average Lutheran hymn-tune. Shared characteristics include their short durations, frequent use of AAB form, modulation to closely related keys, and the occasional appearance of modal key-signatures, such as two flats for the key of C minor (although that's found, to a lesser extent, throughout Bach's music)

These compositions have also been used for many years in the study of keyboard harmony and figured bass realization. Although they were originally meant to be sung, their harmonic and contrapuntal substance is not affected by the omission of the text. Overall, they offer a superb resource for the study of many aspects of music and musicianship.