

For What Purpose? Johann Pachelbel and Incidental Music Commissions: A Case Study of *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan* *Shaun Andrew Stubblefield*

Abstract

Johann Pachelbel's vocal works occupy a small space within current musicological studies, despite approximately 100 such compositions surviving in print and manuscript sources. Moreover, these vocal works and the environment that fostered said pieces remain under-researched, if not a mystery. This article addresses one such choral cantata, *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan* P. 487, and its possible compositional impetus via performance venues, such as funerals, church services and weddings, to better understand the importance of middle-class (Burgher) commissions for German composers during the early 18th century. As will be shown, this examination illustrates how patronage shaped the lives of various vocal composers within the Free Imperial City culture, but, more especially, within the life of Johann Pachelbel during his Nuremberg tenure as organist and church composer.

Johann Pachelbel's vocal works occupy a small space within his overall compositional output. Currently, scholars attribute over 500 works to him, and the vast majority comprise keyboard pieces. Less than 100 represent vocal

works, though they range from individual arias, sacred concertos (or cantatas), Masses, and other liturgical compositions. Many, if not most, of these vocal works were composed during his tenure as head organist of the St. Sebald church in Nuremberg.¹ But, as his organist position neither required vocal compositions, nor did the St. Sebald's church liturgy allow for such compositions outside Saturday and feast-day Vespers. Pachelbel's cantata *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan* P. 487, based on the chorale by Samuel Rodigast (1649–1708), thus presents an opportunity to re-evaluate its possible performance context and purpose of composition. Indeed, this particular cantata underscores the important role that middle-class patronage (i.e. Burghers—those who held no aristocratic title yet

¹ Ewald V. Nolte, et al. "Johann Pachelbel," *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed February 20, 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/50932pg1>, section 1.

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possessed monetary wealth and a specific trade), seen especially with incidental music commissions, played in Nuremberg’s musical life. To explore the importance of such patronage, we will first examine Pachelbel’s cantata, considering its text and musical structure, before considering possible performance venues in detail, thus establishing a clearer picture of the musical environment fostered in early 18th-century Nuremberg.

Debate exists as to when Pachelbel composed this cantata. Given its stylistic traits, however, the work most likely predates *Christ lag in Todesbanden* P. 58,² thereby placing it around the turn of the 18th century with Pachelbel’s *Magnificat* and other cantata settings.³ Indeed, with its sole use of chorale strophes, *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan* represents an example of

² The exact compositional date of P. 58 is not confirmed either. Nolte states, “Two other works, *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan* and *Christ lag in Todesbanden*, are chorale concertos, each based on the music and text of a chorale. The former seems to be the earlier of the two: as has been mentioned, Pachelbel used the same melody for a set of chorale variations possibly included in his *Musicalische Sterbens-Gedancken* (1683), and it is possible that he wrote the concerto at about the same time.” (Grove: “Pachelbel,” section 7, iii).

³ Nolte, “Johann Pachelbel,” *Grove Music Online*, section 7 (iii); and section 7 (iv).

early cantata composition comparable to Bach’s Cantata BWV 4, *Christ lag in Todesbanden*. (See Appendix for the complete cantata text.) Pachelbel composed music to all six chorale verses (see Figure 1). Some verses (3, 5, and 6) are set to a SATB choral structure with modest chamber orchestra consisting of two violins, two violas, a bassoon, and continuo. Other movements provide textual contrast, set either for solo voice or a duet with limited instrumentation (verses 1, 2, and 4). Notably, the orchestra maintains concerted rather than accompaniment style, rarely supporting the singers by doublings but instead maintaining independent lines. Providing further interest, Pachelbel opens with a brief, though harmonically closed “sonata” for full orchestra that serves as a refrain when it returns between verses one and two, and again between verses four and five. Pachelbel maintains a simple harmonic palate by anchoring all movements of this cantata in G Major, though some movements end with full harmonic closure while others lead continuously into the next movement. In general, modulations stay within the realm of tonic-dominant relations, save for a few moments when the relative minor is tonicized.

Figure 1. Formal Overview of *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan* P. 487.⁴

Sonata (Sinfonia)	Full Orchestra: Slow and Homophonic	Harmonically Closed
Verse 1	Soprano voice, viola 1 & 2, bassoon, and continuo. Syllabic text setting, chorale paraphrase.	Harmonically Closed
Sonata (Repeated)	Full Orchestra Slow and Homophonic	Harmonically Closed
Verse 2	Alto and Tenor duet with continuo.	Continuous—without pause between verses.
Verse 3	Full SATB and orchestra: Chorale treatment of the voice with interspersed single/paired voice imitation, ending with short imitation.	Continuous—without pause between verses.
Verse 4	Bass voice with full Orchestra: Mostly syllabic with limited melismatic passages.	Harmonically Closed
Sonata (Repeated)	Full Orchestra: Slow and Homophonic	Harmonically Closed
Verse 5	Full SATB and Orchestra: Cantus firmus in Soprano with imitative ATB supportive voice texture.	Continuous—(PAC) i.e. moves directly into next movement.
Verse 6	Full SATB and Orchestra: Chorale voice treatment with solo episodes interspersed, ending with imitation.	Harmonically Closed

⁴ Johann Pachelbel, “Was Gott tut, das ist Wohlgetan,” ed. Max Seiffert, in *Denkmäler deutscher Tonkunst, Zweite Folge: Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Bayern; Jahrg. VI/1* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1905), 100–117

Little scholarly writing currently exists concerning Pachelbel's vocal music, especially the sacred concertos (cantatas). Moreover, those scholars who devoted energy to writing about these works have been largely mute as to these pieces' original purpose, and the few references to *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan* do not provide a clear picture. For example, the Grove article on Johann Pachelbel refers to pieces associated with death when discussing the chorale *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan*, thus leading readers to associate Pachelbel's cantata of the same name with a funeral commission by a wealthy patron, though no direct statement exists to this effect. Others like Harold E. Samuel argue that Pachelbel composed this cantata for performance in a church service, similar to the model of cantata usage found in Bach's Leipzig. While these two options have been argued for within existing scholarship, a third, neglected venue remains equally viable. Through careful consideration of church rubrics/liturgies, the chorale text, and the music itself, this article will show that the funeral and church-service interpretations cannot remain viable.

To understand scholars' vague association of this cantata to a funeral setting, one must understand the relationship Pachelbel had with the chorale text "Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan." He utilized this chorale in multiple keyboard settings: several chorale preludes for organ, and more notably his *Musicalische Sterbens-Gedancken*.⁵ This latter work encompasses a set of chorale variations that were written and published in 1683 in reaction to the death of his wife and daughter from the plague. Given that Pachelbel used this chorale as a vehicle for mourning in a time of personal struggle, a possible tendency exists to associate this piece with death. The temptation arises, then, to think that Pachelbel composed the cantata *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan* as a

⁵ Nolte, "Johann Pachelbel," *Grove Music Online*, section 5 (ii).

funeral piece. However, several factors argue against this interpretation. First, there exists no specific correlation between the text and its use at funeral or memorial services. Indeed, the *Nürnbergisches 1690 Gesangbuch* categorized this chorale under the broad scope of "Action/Complaint and Cross" (*Klag und Creuz Lieder*), rather than for funerals (*das Begräbnis*).⁶ Second, the chorale's origins do not specifically relate to death either. Samuel Rodigast wrote the chorale text "Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan" in 1675 while living in Jena. Rodigast's devoted friend, and Jena cantor, Severus Gastorius (1646–1682), then set this text to music sometime between 1675–1679.⁷ By the late 17th century the chorale had become disseminated throughout the Lutheran territories of Northern and Central Germany, as indicated by its inclusion in multiple *Gesangbücher*, including Nuremberg's in 1690.⁸ The text emphasizes surrender to the will of God and placing happiness in whatever trial comes one's way. This balance of joy and pain is applicable to almost all life situations, expressed wonderfully in the fourth strophe: "Whatever God does, that is well-done! He is my light, my life, who can wish me no evil, I will surrender myself to him in joy and sorrow!"⁹ Thus, the hymn represents quite a general sentiment and could be utilized in a variety of ways. Finally, burial practices in Nuremberg also argue against Pachelbel's cantata as a funeral piece. As seen in Max Herold's seminal though neglected 1890's *Alt-Nürnberg in seinen Gottesdiensten: Ein Betrag*

⁶ Konrad Feuerlein and Johann Saubert, *Nürnbergisches Gesang-Buch: Darinnen 1230. auserlesene, sowol alt als neue, Geist- Lehr- und Trost-reiche Lieder, auf allerley Zeit- Freud- und Leid-Fälle der gantzen Christenheit gerichtet, und Mit Voransetzung der Auctorum Namen, auch theils vortrefflich-schönen Melodien, Noten und Kupffern gezieret, zu finden* (Nürnberg: Johann Michael Spörlin, 1690), 1205-6.

⁷ *Evangelisches Gesangbuch*, Ausgabe für die Evangelische Lutherische Landeskirche Sachsen (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt GmbH, 2014), 956.

⁸ Feuerlein, *Nürnbergisches Gesang-Buch*, 1205-6.

⁹ See Appendix for full cantata text and translation.

zur Geschichte der Sitte und die Kultus, Nuremberg did not allow funeral services in churches. Rather, the clergy, choir, and mourners processed the coffin through the city to the gravesite where the service would take place.¹⁰ Even funerals for the *Vorneben* (Patricians) did not encompass a service in a church. While the coffin would be placed in one of the two main churches (St. Lorenz and St. Sebald) for a period of several hours before the procession, no liturgical function happened there—the church being open for mourners only.¹¹ Thus, no service existed for which a cantata would have been relevant.

Two city ordinances provide further evidence that Pachelbel's cantata could not have pertained to a funeral service, even during the procession. Throughout Johann Pachelbel's tenure at the St. Sebald church, two city council ordinances concerning treatment of the dead and burials were in effect. These ordinances dealt with payments and classifications of burials similar to that of weddings. Interestingly, both ordinances (1652 and 1705) specifically ban figural music (*Figuralgesänge*—concerted music with instruments)¹² during ceremonies, especially during funeral processions: these ordinances itemize all allowed and forbidden procedures down to the last detail; as a result, any item not listed would also have been disallowed.

Admittedly, the flexible nature of Lutheranism, as regards worship governance, does not immediately disqualify this cantata from occurring during a funeral, as the concept of allowing specific

paraliturgical elements would normally constitute an exception (as opposed to the Calvinistic concept of forbidding worship practices unless expressly stated within church law). However, the Free Imperial City of Nuremberg epitomized a society steeped in tradition, both culturally and politically. This strict adherence to tradition produced a culture which differed greatly from many other German cities. It embodied a dichotomy of opposites, of contradiction: proudly touting its republic-like government yet marginalizing its citizens through Medieval caste traditions; staunchly propagating Lutheranism yet retaining overtly Catholic rituals in liturgy. Concerning the former, Nuremberg's society maintained a five-section caste system based upon economic prosperity and perceived importance to this cause. The first tier or caste consisted of the Patricians; the second caste consisted of the lawyer families and the great merchants of the city; the third caste entailed merchants and handicrafts connected to the prosperity of the great eight councilors. The fourth caste included all small merchants and handymen connected to the prosperity of the remaining councilors, and the fifth comprised of the remaining Nuremberg citizens.¹³ Thus, the council's overriding attitude towards ceremonies focused on the preservation of class distinctions, whereas exceptions would compromise such a rigid social system. Nicholas Hope addresses this socio-political construction by stating that "Authority (*Obrigkeit*) was...the embodiment of Christian duties towards this Christian commonwealth," or maintaining the religious and social equilibrium of the Westphalia Treaty (1648).¹⁴ Authority and class went hand

¹⁰ Max Herold, *Alt-Nürnberg in seinen Gottesdiensten: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Sitte und die Kultus* (Nürnberg, Germany: C. Bertelsmann, 1890), 90–92.

¹¹ Johann Jacob Carbach, *Nürnbergisches Zion: d. i. wahrhaftige Beschreibung aller Kirchen und Schulen in- und außenhalb der Reichs-Stadt Nürnberg* ([Nürnberg], 1733), 1; Herold, *Alt-Nürnberg in seinen Gottesdiensten*, 91.

¹² Martin Geck defines this period term as such.

¹³ W.H. Bruford, *Germany in the Eighteenth Century: The Social Background of the Literary Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), 193–194; and Diefenbacher, Michael. "Nürnberg, Reichsstadt: Politische und soziale Entwicklung." *Historisches Lexikon Bayerns*, 09.03.2010. <http://www.historisches-lexikon-bayerns.de/Lexikon/Nürnberg, Reichsstadt: Politische und soziale Entwicklung>.

¹⁴ Nicholas Hope, *German and Scandinavia Protestantism, 1700 to 1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 73–73.

in hand when an absence of aristocracy existed: money mattered, unlocking governing authority through a city council position. Nuremberg's city council, made up of wealthy Burghers, stressed that "all rites were binding as law, whether divine or human," and the propagation thereof was the governing body's duty which citizens much obey.¹⁵

Bearing in mind this binding authority, the only reference to music performance pertains to full choral funerals, reserved for wealthy individuals due to expense. In this funeral type, the choir sang unaccompanied vocal music on the plaza or churchyard (*Vokal-Music auf dem Kirchhof*), as well as when accompanying the body to the gravesite, but nothing more.¹⁶ Nuremberg's policy of regulating all fees for church services and incidental music provides further clarification, for payment rubrics included only choir and clergy for these outdoor occasions.¹⁷ Given that no records exist for organist payments, and given the ban on figural music at funerals, indeed on funeral services within the church, we can assume that Pachelbel's cantata could not have been performed or commissioned for this type of event.

Another possibility, then, could be that Pachelbel composed *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan* for performance during the regular Sunday liturgy in the St. Sebald church. In his Ph.D. dissertation, "The Seventeenth Century Cantata," Harold Eugene Samuel argues that the St. Sebald and St. Lorenz church choirs performed cantatas on an alternating regular cycle, similar to the churches of Bach's Leipzig.¹⁸ At face-value, the argument that Pachelbel composed this

¹⁵ Hope, *German and Scandinavian Protestantism*, 168; See also Luther's *Small Catechism*, Table of Duties: this table included obedience to the government.

¹⁶ Carbach, *Nürnbergisches Zion*, 91.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 90–92.

¹⁸ Harold E. Samuel, "The Cantata in Nuremberg during the Seventeenth Century" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1963), 19.

cantata (and others) for a Sunday service seems sound. However, examination of Nuremberg's detailed liturgical rubrics makes this argument problematic, as does the absence of 18th-century accounts concerning this practice. In addition, Samuel does not once cite any source for his assertion that the authorities required a cantata for the *Hauptgottesdienst* in either primary church. Rather, Samuel seems to have assumed that all German Lutheran churches followed the Bach/Leipzig worship model. He even cites Bach as the model for comparison but does not provide any definitive source for this assumption.

Though not outrageous, Samuel's assumption remains incorrect. Max Herold's *Alt-Nürnberg in seinen Gottesdiensten* again provides the answers: a place does not exist for a cantata to be sung in Nuremberg's principal Sunday church services in the St. Sebald and St. Lorenz churches. For one, the rubrics simply do not call for a cantata, and for another, the separate Communion and Preaching services in Nuremberg exclude a Leipzig-modeled *Hauptgottesdienst*, which combined the previously mentioned services and framed the sermon with a cantata. Unlike the *Egidienkirche* in Nuremberg, where a full German contemporary service with a documented cantata existed, the St. Sebald church maintained older Latin-language services that had no place for concerted music. Moreover, the reference to regularly performed figural music in the principal churches (taking the place of the German chorale) pertains to the *Saturday Vesper* services relating to important feasts, such as Advent/Christmas and Easter, but not the *Sunday* liturgies, as Samuel supposed.¹⁹ This practice then begs the question: could Pachelbel have composed *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan* for a Vesper service? This possibility seems highly unlikely since the chorale text in question does not lend itself to any feast celebrated in

¹⁹ Herold, *Alt-Nürnberg in seinen Gottesdiensten*, 124.

Nuremberg, whereas other Pachelbel cantata texts did fit the seasons where a cantata would have been performed. (For instance, Pachelbel's *Christ lag in Todesbanden* clearly functions as an Easter cantata.)

Another venue to consider in relation to *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan* is the *Marienkirche*. This church held a unique place in the worship life of Nuremberg since it was the only one that did not have a Communion service or regular choir. Before and during Kapellmeister Maximilian Zeidler's tenure (1705/12-1745), the *Marienkirche* thus pooled resources from the surrounding churches to perform Italianate cantatas for the *Musik-Andachten*.²⁰ This musical collaboration enabled performance of sacred concerted works, especially during the Sunday *Amt* (morning service) but also the Vespers service.²¹ Yet, conflicting evidence exists between scholars as to which service (either *Amt* or Vespers) these cantatas would have been performed. Harold E. Samuel, as well as Ewald Nolte, suggest that the Vesper service contained the sacred concerto; however, in the material they cite for evidence, there exists no explicit statement that this service featured such a work. Instead, Max Herold states vaguely that, "the Nuremberg Kapellmeister with his choir performs music every Sunday and feast-days in the [*Marienkirche*] church."²² Samuel cites a period travel publication (Carbach's 1733 *Nürnbergisches Zion*) to substantiate his claim; nevertheless, this document discusses music only briefly, stating, "In this church [*Marienkirche*] the following services will be held: on all Sundays

and Feast days an early preaching service will be held, and midday, at Vesper time, a song [chorale] will be sung and a chapter from the Bible read."²³ Carbach continues, listing the services during the week but mentions no reference to concerted or figural music as had been suggested.²⁴ The Carbach text, thus, discredits the assertion that the Vespers service within the *Marienkirche* contained a cantata.

Conversely, in compiling the rubrics for the *Marienkirche* in his *Alt-Nürnberg in seinen Gottesdiensten*, Max Herold lists the order of service for the *Predigt Amt*, *Salve Regina*, and Vespers. This detailed source references the cantata (i.e. "Musick," rather than "Lied" or "Chorale") only for the *Amt*, while the Vesper service states that the choir sang the *Magnificat* in alternation with the organ (i.e. the choir sang verse one, the organist improvised or played the second verse, and so on.) without any reference to "Musick." Herold even lists the changes made for feast-day Vespers, but, again, no "Musick" reference exists as in the *Predigt Amt*.²⁵ Further substantiating the notion that the *Predigt Amt* contained the cantata and not the Vespers service is a libretto book printed in 1725 that contains the list of cantatas that were performed and their date, compiled by Kapellmeister Maximilian Zeidler (1680-1745). In the preface to this book, Zeidler states: "Edifying devotions in St. Mary's, which every Sunday, feast, and celebration days are led, being many times split before and after the sermon [which only occurred in the *Predigt Amt*]."²⁶ This period source shows that a cantata

²⁰ Ibid., 254; and Maximilian Zeidler, *Geistliches Psalter-Spiel, oder Betrachtungen auf alle Fest-Sonn- und Feyer-Tage zur Beförderung Christlicher Andacht in gebundener Schreib-Art verfasst*. (16 November, Nürnberg, 1718). This source shows that cantatas pertaining to the liturgical year were being composed and performed every Sunday.

²¹ Zeidler, *Geistliches Psalter-Spiel*, 250-51 and 264-266.

²² Ibid., 230. "Der Nürnberische Kapellmeister mit seinem Musikchor alle Sonn und Feiertage Kirchemusik zu machen."

²³ Carbach, 42; "In deiser Kirche wird nachfolgender Gottesdienst verrichtet: alle Sonn und Feyertagen, wird früh eine Predigt gehalten, und Nachmittag zur Versper-Zeit wird eine Lied teutsch gesungen und ein Capitel aus der Bibel gelesen."

²⁴ Ibid., 41-2.

²⁵ Herold, 253-54 and 264-65.

²⁶ Ibid., 254; and Zeidler, Vorrede, 3-5: "Erbauliche Andachten, welche alle Sonn, Fest, und Feiertage,

was, in fact, performed during the morning *Amt* and not in the Vesper service as previously thought. Such a schedule undermines the hypothesis that Pachelbel composed his cantatas for the *Predigt Amt*, for he would have been needed to play in the St. Sebald for the service in that church. This preoccupation does not instantly discount the possibility of him composing for this venue. However, Zeidler actively produced libretti books for his compositions, thereby guarding his musical privilege well and discouraging the previous era's collaboration with regional musicians. Thus, it is clear that the Kapellmeister wrote and performed his own music for this venue, while excluding other composers.

If the above-mentioned venues could not accommodate Pachelbel's cantata, it therefore seems appropriate to examine weddings as the possible impetus for composition and performance. As mentioned, Nuremberg maintained a strict caste hierarchy throughout the 18th century, extending to all levels of musical events—even weddings. The city council regulated the types of weddings via social class and the payments for each, and also forbade weddings in any church but the St. Sebald and St. Lorenz churches, stating that either the bride or groom must be a citizen of the city and must go to the main pastor (*Herr Schaffer*) of either church to be married (*anmelden*).²⁷ Additionally, the liturgical rubrics also mention German figural music as a central feature for these services at the St. Sebald and St. Lorenz churches. However, figural music occurred only at wedding Masses for wealthier middle-class families (i.e. "Elites" or *Vornehmen*), specifically before and after the reading of the Gospel (or, in case of a half-liturgy, just before the Gospel).²⁸

mehrentheils vor und bißweilen abgetheilt, nach der Predigt, in der St. Marienkirche, musicalisch auf, geführt warden."

²⁷ Carbach, 1.

²⁸ Herold, 153–54; and 171–72.

Interestingly, Herold states that two organists were typically present for these full wedding Masses: "one who leads the music and one to play."²⁹ In other words, one organist supplied and directed the music—the commissioned work or the cantata—while another, the organist, played during the performance, thus substantiating a venue which would have allowed for Pachelbel to compose and conduct his commissioned works. Additional directions from the city council also confirm the possibility of Pachelbel's cantata serving as a wedding cantata. The council mandated that the *Stadtpfeifer's* full complement must play for these full and half wedding Masses, as well as twenty school children and the deacon's choir for choral works. These performing forces provide the necessary musicians required for the cantata in question.³⁰ Incidentally, while no specific commission receipt or letter exists to corroborate my assertion that a Burgher commissioned this work, no other venue presented thus far could accommodate this specific cantata without contradicting extant rubrics and customs already mentioned. What is more, Pachelbel also composed a healthy body of arias for solo voice, basso continuo, and various instruments, which scholars believe would have been performed at smaller house weddings, baptisms, and other special occasions, due to the texts' allusions to such events—none of which contain commission receipts associated with the manuscripts.³¹ These requirements and documentation, again, support the organist composing figural music, and having such music being present for these types of special events.

The final piece of evidence to support a wedding Mass interpretation comes not from Nuremberg but rather from the important trade city to the

²⁹ "Dem Organist wegen der Musick in der kirchen ... Dem Organist, der das Regal schlägt..."; quoted in Herold, 84.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 84.

³¹ Nolte, "Johann Pachelbel," section 7 (i).

north, Leipzig. The scholar Günther Stiller relates how Johann Sebastian Bach generated a substantial amount of his yearly income from wedding and funeral music. Similar to Pachelbel in Nuremberg, Bach composed both large and small scale works for wedding Masses and private (house) weddings. Stiller further supports such activity through observations and research into the daily life of Bach as a cantor. He states:

No public weddings or funerals were held without the participation of the choir, already because the choir was indispensable for leading congregational singing. A small choir would take part in even weddings at home. Thus, we are told of a house wedding in which eight pupils were appointed to sing the usual wedding hymns.³²

Even more notable, Stiller continues by listing hymn texts to which Bach composed wedding cantatas: “Was Gott tut, das ist wohgetan, In allen meinen Taten, Sei Lob und Ehr dem höchsten Gutt, and Nun danket alle Gott.”³³ Stiller argues that though these cantatas could also have been used in worship service, there are no assigned readings that correspond to them. As a result, Bach most likely composed and performed them for full wedding Masses during his tenure.³⁴ Frederick Hudson substantiates Stiller’s claims by referencing “Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan” as a chorale regularly used at weddings before the solemnization of vows, thereby reinforcing Bach’s BWV 100 as a wedding cantata.³⁵ Hudson also makes

³² Günther Stiller, *Johann Sebastian Bach and Liturgical Life in Leipzig*, ed. Robin A. Leaver and trans. Herbert J. A. Bouman, Daniel F. Poellot, and Hilton C. Oswald (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing, 1984), 93-4.

³³ Stiller, *Johann Sebastian Bach and Liturgical Life in Leipzig*, 93-4.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 94.

³⁵ Frederick Hudson, “Bach’s Wedding Music,” *Current Musicology* 7 (Fall 1968): 111.

the distinction between church cantatas and wedding-time cantatas (*Hochzeitkantaten*), stating that the latter were much smaller in scale and used to “entertain the bridal party and guests at the wedding breakfast which followed the service,” versus the larger scale and more formal text used for cantatas performed at the church wedding ceremony.³⁶

Similarities between the structure of a wedding Mass and the structure of Pachelbel’s cantata also support the conjecture that the latter indeed was written for such an event. The wedding rubrics for St. Sebald especially, but also St. Lorenz, illuminate the format for such events in churches. At St. Sebald’s, the wedding rubric vaguely described the context of musical performance, stating “If a wedding falls on Mondays, Tuesdays, or Wednesdays from the Elite class (either whole or half liturgies) the school choirs join the Deacons’ choir for the ‘figural music.’”³⁷ St. Lorenz, however, offered a structured rubric, including specific instructions to have “figural music” before and after the Gospel reading.³⁸ Such instructions imply that a sectional cantata would have been appropriate, with part one occurring before the Gospel and part two following thereafter.³⁹ J.S. Bach’s own wedding cantatas embodied a similar practice, offering musical sections that occurred before and after the vows.⁴⁰ Bearing this practice in

³⁶ Hudson, “Bach’s Wedding Music,” 111.

³⁷ Herold, 153-54; “Wenn auf den Montag, Dienstag oder Mittwoch eine Hochzeit fällt und zwar aus den vornehmsten Ständen (Ganz und halb-Votiv gennant, nobiliorum vel Honestiorum), wird zwar der Diakonenchor gehalten, an die Stelle des Schülerchors aber tritt eine Figural Musik.“

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 171-72; “Wenn auf den Montag, Dienstag oder Mittwoch eine Hochzeit fällt, sei es eine aus den Patrizian oder von den Vornehmen überhaupt oder auch eine mittlere Hochzeit, so ist die Ordnung für den Chor folgende: ...10. Nun folgt bei vornehmeren Hochzeiten (Ganz und halb Votiven) eine Figuralmusik...12. wieder folgt Figuralmusik.“

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 153-54; and 171-72.

⁴⁰ Hudson, 114.

mind, it seems logical to assume that other composers outside of Leipzig structured their wedding cantatas in large-scale parts to fit important divisions within the wedding service. In this context, Pachelbel's use of a recurring Sonata within *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan* seems significant. As shown earlier, this sonata occurs three times, dividing the cantata into three main sections. Indeed, the second and third appearances both follow harmonically-closed verse settings, making each of the three sections end with formal integrity. These three sections could easily have accommodated important divisions within the wedding services at Nuremberg's main churches (see Figure 2). As seen, Pachelbel likely envisioned the cantata

opening the wedding Mass, taking the place of the customary hymn "Wo Gott zum Haus nicht giebt" at a half Mass,⁴¹ and parts two and three bookending the Gospel reading. Conversely, perhaps the first and second cantata sections could have occurred before and after the vows (or Gospel reading), with the third section following the Aaronic blessing. Either way, the clear sectionalized manner of Pachelbel's cantata suggests easy alignment with a wedding service—an argument that seems the most viable given the exploration of various possible performance venues and the lack of commission receipts or letters.

⁴¹ Herold, 153.

Figure 2. *Proposed Wedding Service Outline for Full and Half Wedding Masses*

1. Organ Prelude	8. 4th Verse
2. Sonata (Full)/ Hymn (Half)	9. Gospel Reading and Vows
3. 1st Verse	10. Sonata
1. Opening Collect and Prayers	11. 5th Verse
5. Sonata	12. 6th Verse
6. 2nd Verse	13. Collect and Aaronic Blessing
7. 3rd Verse	14. Organ Postlude

In all, Johann Pachelbel's cantata *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan* P. 487 presents an opportunity to re-evaluate the possible performance context and importance of Burgher commissions in Nuremberg. As all the above suggests, Nuremberg boasted a lively music scene at the turn of the 18th century, which continued largely until the city government's dissolution in the early 19th century. However, as the 18th century progressed, a change in focus occurred, for middle-class patronage shifted to more secular genres, such as balls, concerts, and operas. While weddings and funerals continued to be an important part of everyday life, subsequent organists (including

Johann Pachelbel's son Wilhelm) ceased to cultivate vocal genres for these events, instead focusing on keyboard music for publication as an opportunity to make money.⁴² Whether this shift came about by personal preference or lack of commissions remains elusive, but understanding the venues and works of earlier composers remains important for understanding the complex, and vibrant musical environment middle-class patronage created.

⁴² Ewald V. Nolte, et al., "Wilhelm H. Pachelbel," *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed March 2, 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/50932pg2>.

Despite this vibrant culture, little attention has been paid by scholars (past and present) to this city and its music. What little scholarly writing exists paints this city in a negative or dismissive manner. This attitude traces itself to the city's slow economic decline during the latter part of the 18th century and the city's continued strict caste structure, so criticized by traveling visitors. For example, the British historian Charles Burney related on his travels in Germany during the 1770s that,

Whoever therefore seeks music in Germany, should do it at the several courts, not in the free imperial cities, which are generally inhabited by poor industrious people, whose genius is chilled and repressed by penury; who can bestow nothing on vain pomp and luxury; but think themselves happy, in the possession of necessaries.⁴³

Though Burney traveled at a time when Classical genres of the symphony and opera dominated tastes and style preferences, his commentary largely diminishes the music performed outside the theatre and concert hall. Thus, when he visited the imperial free cities, Burney disregarded the fundamental idea of middle-class patronage as it related to private events and civic celebrations. Yet, these events constituted the arena where a commissioned composer could show off his musical training in such an environment, while also directly serving the conservative musical tastes of the "modest" middle-class. Burney's observations represent a priceless window into 18th-century societal Europe; however, stating that nothing musically happened in Germany's free imperial cities worth noting disserves a great majority of composers outside the continent's musical capitals.

⁴³ Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany, The Netherlands, and United Provinces*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (1775; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 118-119.

Nuremberg represents one of these "spurned" cities Burney mentions in his travels. His opinion, echoed by others, derive from the fact that Nuremberg truly did experience a social and political decline during the 18th century. The population of the city continued to decrease over the century; and while the city became less important politically, its music continued to uphold traditional "middle-class" characteristics and venues. Perhaps, this lack of innovation created a false sense of stagnation. Other contemporary accounts reinforce this perception. For instance, on his visit to the city in the late 18th century, Mozart famously wrote, "Nuremberg, what an ugly city," while also insisting that the city remained musically and culturally backward.⁴⁴

Complete re-evaluation of middle-class (Burgher) patronage in Nuremberg cannot be addressed within the scope of this article. However, through closer examination of Johann Pachelbel's cantata *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan*, specifically its text, musical structure, and possible performance venues, a brief picture of Nuremberg's musical environment in the 18th century reveals itself. Forming such a picture also makes possible a better understanding of how musical culture subsequently changed. True, much archival information remains yet to be discovered and explored but settling for notions that Mozart and Charles Burney put forth without question creates a jaded and in many ways false understanding of Nuremberg. Quite simply, the city's middle class continued to foster music making during the 18th century with church services, weddings, funerals, and the *Musik-Andachten* of the *Marienkirche*, (let alone countless secular genres unexplored in this article) despite the city's social-economic decline, thus shedding light on the vibrant musical environment and performance practice found throughout German imperial cities.

⁴⁴ Franz Krautmann, "Musik in der Reichstadt Nürnberg," in the Programm Proceedings of the *31 Deutsches Mozartfest der Deutschen Mozart-Gesellschaft, Nürnberg: 15-23 Mai 1982*, under the direction of Dietrich Bessler, 12-24 (Augsburg: Deutsche Mozart-Gesellschaft, 1982), 13.

Appendix: Text and Translation of “Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan:”⁴⁵

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan!
Es bleibt gerecht sein Wille;
Wie er fängt meine Sachen an,
Will ich ihm halten stille.
Er ist mein Gott, der in der Not
Mich wohl weiß zu erhalten,
Drum laß' ich ihn nur walten. | Whatever God does, that is well-done!
His will remains just;
In-whatever-way he deals-with my affairs,
submit to him quietly.
He is my God, who in distress
Knows well how to sustain me;
Therefore I will just allow him to rule. |
| 2 Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan!
Er wird mich nicht betrügen,
Er führet mich auf rechter Bahn;
So laß' ich mich bengenügen
An seiner Huld und hab' Geduld,
Er wird mein Unglück wenden,
Es steht in seinen Händen. | Whatever God does, that is well-done!
He will not deceive me;
He leads me on the right course,
Therefore I content myself
With his graciousness and have patience
He will change my misfortune;
It (lies) in his hands. |
| 3 Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan!
Er wird mich wohl bedenken;
Er, als mein Arzt und Wundermann,
Wird mir nicht Gift einschenken
Für Arznei; Gott ist getreu,
Drum will ich auf ihn bauen
Und seiner Güte trauen. | Whatever God does, that is well-done!
He will indeed think of me;
He, as my physician and man-of-wonders,
Will not me poison
For medicine.
Therefore I will build upon him
And trust his grace. |
| 4 Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan!
Er ist mein Licht und Leben,
Der mir nichts Böses gönnen kann;
Ich will mich ihm ergeben
In Freud' und Leid; es kommt die Zeit,
Da öffentlich erscheint,
Wie treulich er es meineth. | Whatever God does, that is well-done!
He is my light, my life,
Who can wish me no evil,
I will surrender myself to him
In joy and sorrow! The time will come,
when it becomes manifest
how faithful his intentions are. |
| 5 Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan!
Muß ich den Kelch gleich schmecken,
Der bitter ist nach meinem Wahn,
Laß' ich mich doch nicht schrecken,
Weil doch zuletzt ich werd' ergötzt
Mit süßem Trost im Herzen,
Da weichen alle Schmerzen. | Whatever God does, that is well-done!
Though I must drink the cup
That, in my delusion, seems bitter to me,
I nevertheless allow myself not to be frightened
For nevertheless in the end I will be delighted
With sweet comfort in (my) heart;
Then will all sufferings retreat. |
| 6 Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan!
Dabei will ich verbleiben;
Es mag mich auf die rauhe Bahn
Not, Tod und Elend treiben,
So wird Gott mich ganz väterlich
In seinen Armen halten,
Drum laß' ich ihn nur walten. | Whatever God does, that is well-done!
In that I want to abide;
(Now) may me on a harsh course
If I be driven on a harsh course by want, death, and distress
then will God Right fatherly
hold me in his arms;
Therefore I just allow him sovereign control. |

⁴⁵ Unger, Melvin P., *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts: An Interlinear Translation with Reference Guide to Biblical Quotations and Allusions* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1996), 355-359.

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