

Johann Sebastian Bach
The Story of the Boy
Who Sang in the Streets

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BY
THOMAS TAPPER



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THE STORY OF THE BOY WHO SANG IN THE STREETS

**This is the house in which
JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH
was born.**



THE HOUSE IN WHICH BACH WAS BORN.

This house stands in the town of Eisenach in Germany. It looks very much the same today as it did when Sebastian was a little boy. Many people go there to visit this house because the little boy grew to be a famous man. In Eisenach there is a statue of Bach near the palace.



STATUE OF BACH AT EISENACH.

In the same town in which Sebastian was born there stands on the top of a hill a very famous castle built many hundreds of years ago.

This castle is called the Wartburg.



THE CASTLE AT WARTBURG.

As a boy little Sebastian used to climb the hill with his friends, and they, no doubt, had a happy time playing about the castle grounds. In one of its great halls the minstrels of Germany held their Song Contests.

When Sebastian was old enough he used to travel afoot, just as the minstrels did; his purpose was to go to hear fine organ players. Once as he sat weary by the roadside someone threw a herring to him so that he might eat as he rested.



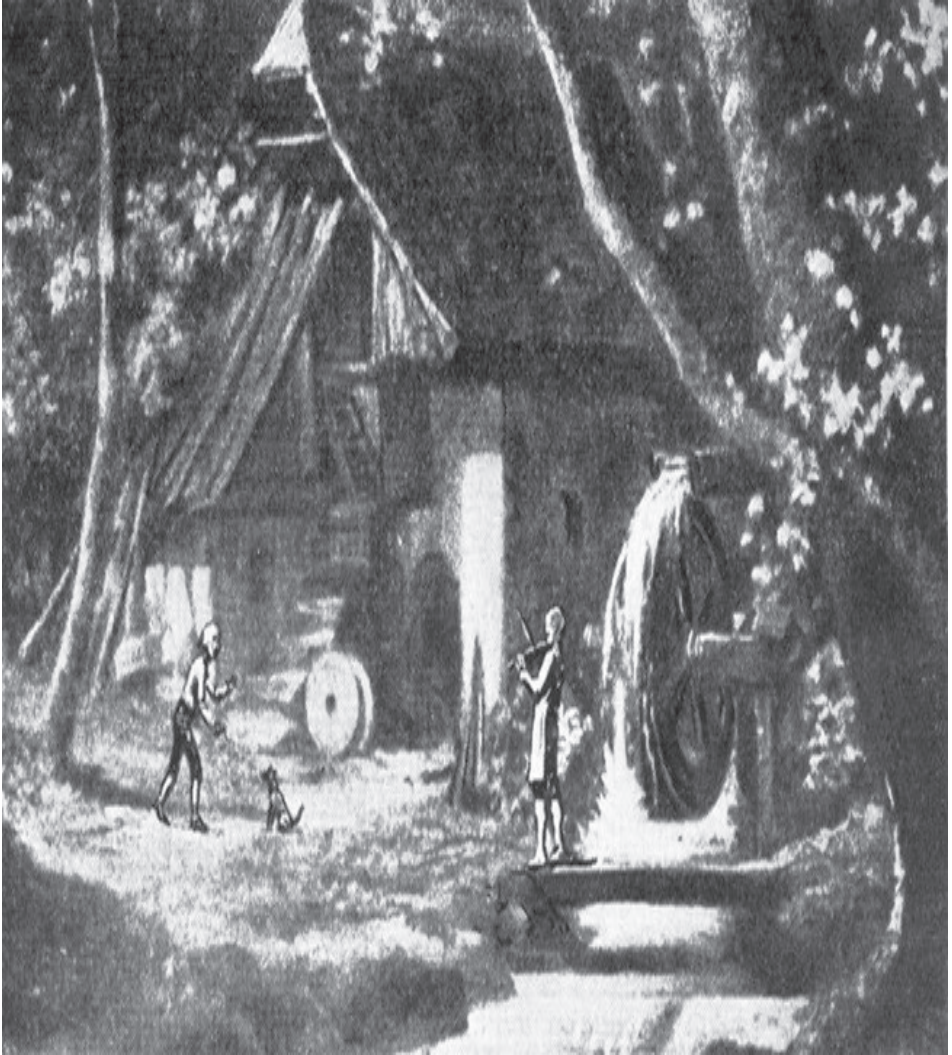
BACH EATING THE HERRING.

Little Sebastian's father was named
JOHANN AMBROSIUS BACH.
He, too, was a musician, as his people had been for
many years.



JOHANN AMBROSIUS BACH.

One of these was a miller who played and sang while the corn was grinding. His name was Veit Bach, and his little boy was called Hans, the Player, because he, too, loved to play the violin.



VEIT BACH AND HIS SON HANS.

When Sebastian was ten years old his father and mother died. So he went to live with his brother, whose home was a few miles away.

Of this brother Sebastian had music lessons, and he improved so rapidly that he used to beg to be allowed to play the pieces in a big book in the library.

But the brother refused him this pleasure. However, little Sebastian was eager to learn all the music he could find, so he used to sit up on moonlight nights and copy these pages while his brother was asleep.

But what do you think happened when he had copied everything in that big book?

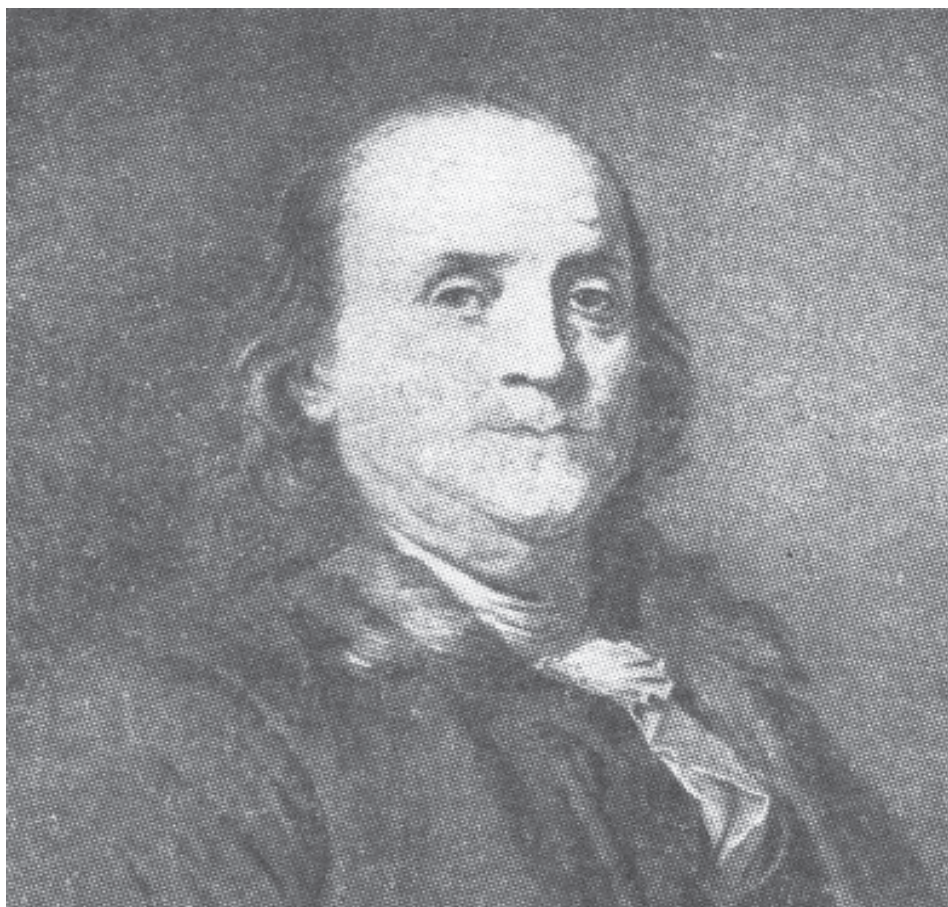
His brother found out what he had done and took all his precious music away from him.



BACH COPYING MUSIC BY MOONLIGHT.

If you know any boy who is about twenty years old you may say to him, Bach was as old as you are when Benjamin Franklin was born in Boston.

And although there was this difference of twenty years or so in their ages, we may think of them at work in the world at the same time. You must remember that all men like Franklin and Bach who became famous did so by working very hard.



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

Franklin, too, was born very poor. Once he walked the streets of Philadelphia with a loaf of bread under each arm. But by being faithful in all he did he became the friend of all his countrymen and of Kings and Queens besides.

Benjamin Franklin was quite a little younger than Sebastian Bach. But there was a famous man who was almost exactly Sebastian's age. This man composed an Oratorio that is loved by everybody. It is sung in cities and towns all over the world, particularly at Christmas time.

Do you happen to know the name of this Oratorio? If not, you can surely learn it by asking someone or by looking it up in a book.

Write in the name of the composer of this Oratorio below the picture, and write on this line the name of the Oratorio itself.



THE COMPOSER'S NAME IS

The Oratorio, the name of which you have just written, was first sung in the Irish city of Dublin, 1742.

At that time Sebastian Bach was living in Leipsic and had been for many years at the head of the Thomas School. He was known as its Cantor. Bach worked very hard here to supply music for several of the Leipsic churches, and he worked so well that his fame spread until it reached the ears of the Emperor.

Frederick the Great was also a musician and composer. So he invited Sebastian Bach to visit him at his castle. There were many people present, but Sebastian Bach was the principal guest. He played on many of the Emperor's fine pianos. When he reached home again he composed a musical work and dedicated it to the Emperor.



**BACH PLAYING BEFORE FREDERICK
THE GREAT.**

The kind of a piano that Sebastian Bach played on was not called a piano in his day. It was called a Clavier or Clavichord.

Some day you will study a collection of pieces by Sebastian Bach which was written for this instrument and was called The Well Tempered Clavichord.

This is the kind of piano, or clavichord, that Bach used.



THE CLAVICHORD.

And here is the beginning of the very first piece in the collection of which we have just spoken in Bach's handwriting.



BACH'S HANDWRITING.



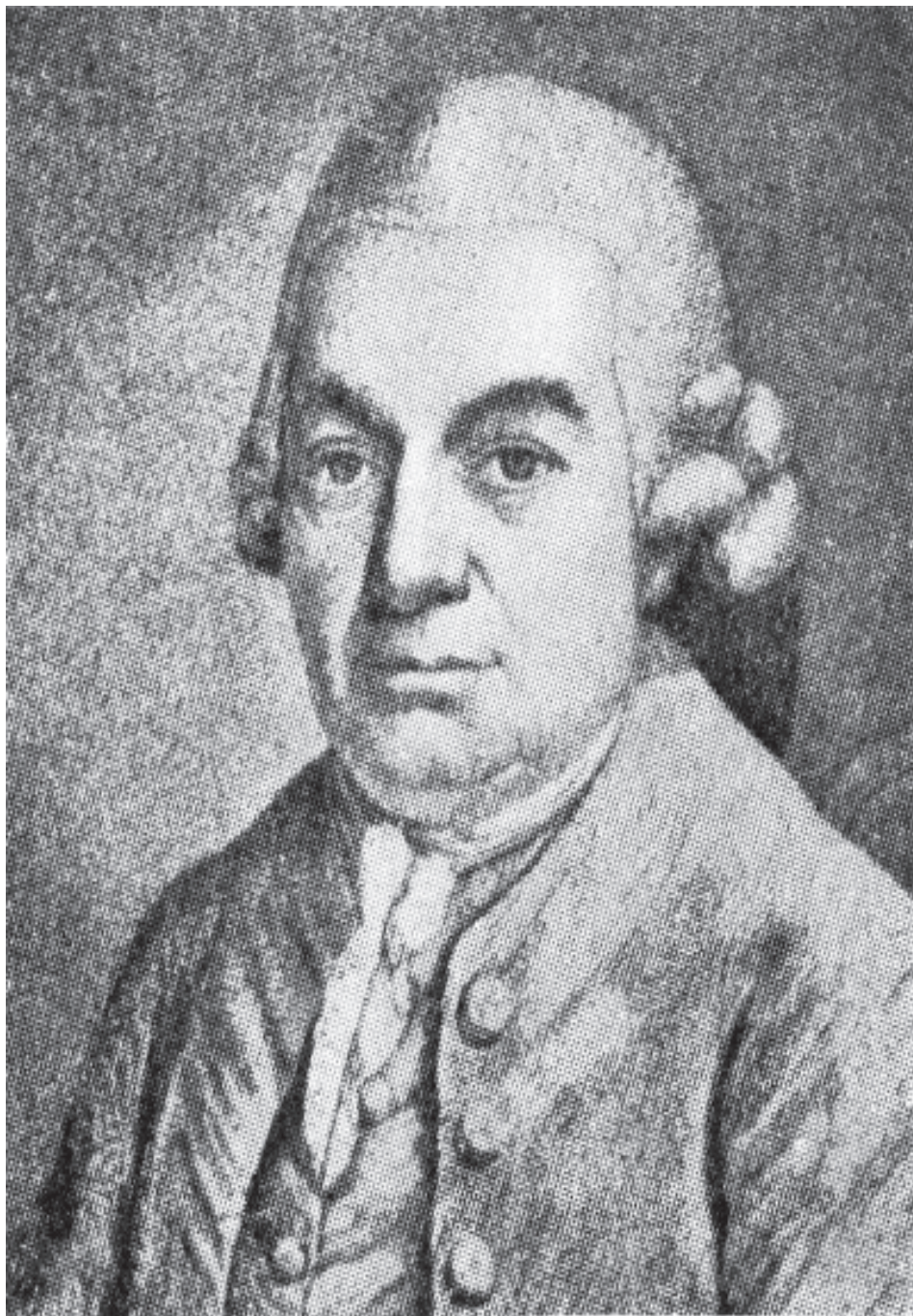
**MORNING PRAYERS IN THE HOME
OF JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH.**

Sebastian Bach had a very large family, twenty children altogether. Two of them studied music faithfully with their father.

One was Friedmann, for whom the father wrote a book called Little Preludes. Friedmann's brother, Philipp Emanuel Bach, was a very fine clavichord player. He wrote a book about music and composed many pieces.



WILLIAM FRIEDMANN BACH.



PHILIPP EMANUEL BACH.

Sebastian Bach died in 1750. He was sixty-five years of age.

Benjamin Franklin was at that time forty-four years old and George

Washington was eighteen.

This is the way Bach wrote his name.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light background. The signature reads "Johann Sebastian Bach." in a cursive script. The first letter 'J' is large and loops around the first part of the name. The 'B' at the end is also large and loops around the final part of the name. There is a period at the end of the signature.

FACTS ABOUT SEBASTIAN BACH.

Read these facts about Sebastian Bach and try to write his story out of them, using your own words.

When your story is finished ask your mother or your teacher to read it. When you have made it as perfect as you can, copy it on pages 14, 15 and 16.

1. Full name: Johann Sebastian Bach.
2. Born 1685, died 1750.
3. As a little boy he sang in the streets, begging from door to door.
4. His father and mother died when he was ten years old.
5. He went to live with his brother.
6. He took his first position when he was seventeen.
7. He used to walk long distances to hear famous organists, one of whom was named Buxtehude.
8. He could play the organ, clavichord, violin, and other stringed instruments.
9. He wrote music for the voice (solo and chorus).
10. And for many different instruments.
11. He never met his fellow countryman, Handel.
12. Bach copied lots of music because printed music was dear in his day.
13. He was Cantor of the Thomas School for many years.
14. Once he visited Frederick the Great at Potsdam.
15. For his little son, Friedmann, he wrote a book of Little Preludes.

SOME QUESTIONS.

1. In what year did Bach die?
2. Name an American who was alive at the same time.
3. What famous castle can be seen from the streets of Eisenach?
4. What other great German composer lived in Bach's time?
5. What instruments could Bach play?
6. For what purpose did Bach travel from place to place, as a boy?
7. What was the name of Sebastian's father?
8. Who was Hans, the Player?
9. Were any of Bach's children musical?
10. What music by Bach have you heard?

THE STORY OF JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH



