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**PAUSING FOR REFLECTION:
RE-EVALUATING BACH'S USE OF THE FERMATA**

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0502450

**THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MMUS**

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Abstract

The fermata sign placed above a note is nowadays used more or less exclusively to signify a pause of indeterminate length on the affected note. Within Bach's works, the fermata makes appearances in connection with chorales in both the vocal works and chorale preludes for organ. The fermata also occurs in secular pieces such as the suites and Well-Tempered Clavier. Various viewpoints as to the meaning of the fermata have developed, including calls to ignore them as pauses altogether, to signify breathing points, to hold the affected note for twice its length followed by a rest and so on. In the organ chorale preludes, there is sufficient movement in other parts for Koopman (2003) and others to assume that treating the fermata symbol as a pause would be impossible. Others have also claimed that other 17th- and 18th- century chorale sources do not use the fermata symbol but write out extended final notes of phrases – a practice, according to Rifkin (2005, email, 23 November), that for Bach would have destroyed the metre of the chorale melody. Bearing in mind these views together with Bach's additional practice of improvising between chorale phrases in his compositions ('In Dulci Jubilo' BWV751 for example) and *extempore* during services, it is clear that the debate is far from over.

My objective in this dissertation is to clarify Bach's use of the fermata symbol within the sacred vocal works and in particular the Lutheran chorale. An analysis of performance practice trends especially since the beginning of the HIP movement gives an insight into why the debate first started (Nikolaus Harnoncourt's practice first arose my suspicions that HIP conductors had given the issue insufficient thought). I analyse various Lutheran hymnals and chorale sources and examine uses

of the word ‘fermata’ and the genesis of its graphological form. Further insight into Bach’s usage lies in the practice of Lutheran worship itself – examining the participation of the congregation in such chorales brings in issues concerning the spirituality evoked both by the chorale melodies and their texts. Examining works by Bach’s contemporaries also helps us understand whether Bach was in fact a consolidator or trendsetter in the notation of chorales. Analysis of works such as the motets and the opening chorus of the *Saint Matthew Passion*, further illuminates Bach’s treatment of chorales within other structures.

I believe very strongly that an in-depth answer about Bach’s use of the fermata in the Lutheran chorale is long overdue. It seems true of any performance practice that once one influential conductor starts to insist on a performance one way that others will surely follow. The problems so far have been that certain individuals have dwelt on Bach’s chorale treatment in non-vocal works as proof of practice in the cantatas and passions, whereas others have used contemporary composers’ habits as proof of Bach’s habits. The aim here, in as much as it is possible, is to give an objective assessment of the wide range of evidence surrounding Bach’s practice. I conclude that in Bach chorales, fermata notes should be held for longer than their notated value. Technically, Bach used the fermata symbol to visually shorten last notes of chorale lines in order to ensure that the sense of the strong and weak beats was retained and also to ensure that the final bar of the chorale complimented any initial upbeat. A comparison with Telemann’s various notational styles and indeed Bach’s own occasional minim notation reveals many similarities in thought process and in the end demonstrates that although the performance perhaps sounded the same, Bach developed a more refined notational practice.

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Introduction

The Fermata as a Musical Symbol

Fermata

(It.: 'pause').

The sign of the corona or point surmounted by a semicircle showing the end of a phrase or indicating the prolongation of a note or a rest beyond its usual value. 'Fermata' came into American usage during the 19th century; H.W. Pilkington, in A Musical Dictionary (Boston, 1812), still gave only 'pause', but both fermata and Pause are now used for this sign.

(Fuller D, New Grove Dictionary of Music Online)

The above definition of 'fermata' is not only a New Grove definition but also the entire article on the subject. In the few lines that it affords, several points can be learned: first, a precise description of the visual aspect of the symbol and secondly, two interpretations of what such a symbol indicates in a musical score. Both meanings 'showing the end of a phrase' and 'the prolongation of a note or...rest beyond its usual value' are relevant to the discussion of the fermata in the Bach chorale but the definition does not immediately lend itself to the possibility that both meanings may apply at the same time. In addition, it is clear that the fermata has multiple other meanings which at first glance are all related to each other. Here lies one of the problems of this topic – the fact that the fermata symbol is used so widely and for so many different purposes that it is difficult to know what the fermata means in the chorale environment. Does the symbol simply mean the end of a phrase without holding or a prolongation of the last note of the phrase beyond its written value, or

indeed something else? The other immediate problem which the New Grove picks up on is the fact that the term 'fermata' seemingly only came into existence in 1812. The Oxford English Dictionary shows a date of 1842. Whichever date is the more accurate, it is clear that Bach would probably not have known the term even if he was familiar with the various uses. Bach would probably have known the term 'corona' or 'coronata' which can be found in Walther's *Musicalisches Lexicon oder Musicalische Bibliothec* (1732):

“Corona” oder “Coronata,” also wird von den Italiänern dieses Zeichen {the fermata symbol is shown} genennet, welches, wenn es über gewissen Noten in allen Stimmen zugleich vorkommt, ein allgemeines Stillschweigen, oder eine “Pausan generalem” bedeutet; wenn es über einer ‘final-’ Note in einer Stimme allein stehet, so zeigt es an, daß sie daselbst so lange aushalten soll, bis die übrigen Stimmen auch zu ihrem natürlichen Schluß nachkommen; die Frantzosen nennen es ‘Point d’Orgue.’ Man braucht es auch in den Canonibus, um den Ort zu bemercken, wo alle Stimmen inne halten können, wenn beschlossen werden soll.”

[The Italians call this symbol {fermata} a *corona* or *coronata* when it is placed over certain notes in all the parts at the same point in order to indicate a general cessation or General Pause; if, however, it appears over only a single note in only one part, then it indicates that this note must be held as long as necessary until all the other parts have reached their conclusion; the French call this *Point d’Orgue*. It is also used in canons in order to mark the spot where all voices have to end.] [trans. Braatz, T 2003]

The pause on a individual note or chord, for example in an instrumental piece, is perhaps the most common use of the symbol today as indeed it was in Bach’s time too:

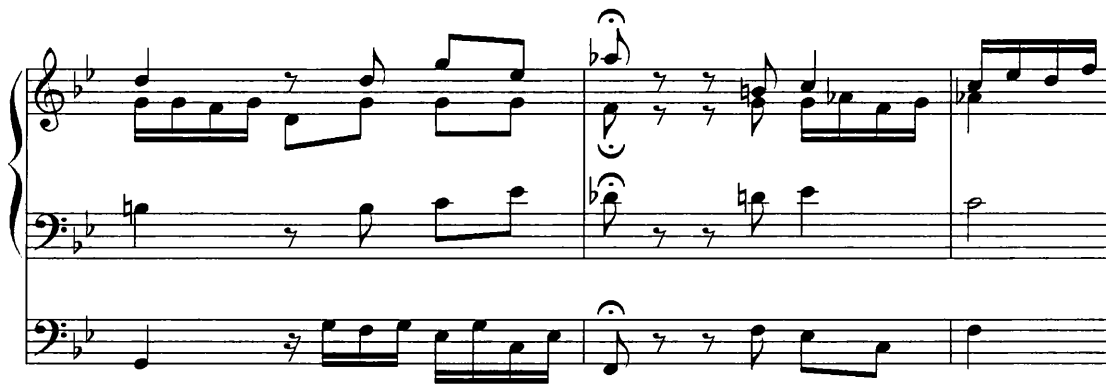


Figure 1 – BWV 582 b.284ff

Here, the fermata on the Neapolitan sixth chord coincides with a moment of tremendous tension and climax in the music. At this point, some organists might fill in an appropriate cadenza, much like when a player chances upon a fermata towards the end of a classical concerto movement. It may feel right to stretch out the initial chord under the symbol in some manner. On the other hand, the note under the fermata is only a quaver and is followed by several quaver rests. A closer inspection of the score reveals that Bach presumably wanted the phrase ending in b. 287 to end on the first beat of the bar and therefore retrospectively had to start the phrase in b.285 halfway through the second beat. The use of quaver rests after the pause may well notate precisely the required gap between the Neapolitan chord (however long it is held or elaborated) and a return to strict time.

An even more famous example of the fermata as pause is in the Toccata and Fugue BWV565:



Figure 2 – BWV565 b.1

Attribution questions aside, the scribe's use of fermatas on the first and last notes of the scalar motive cannot mean anything other than a pause. But one has to question why the scribe wrote the last note as a semiquaver and not a longer note value. Perhaps studying the fermata in the chorale may lead to a possible answer. BWV565 is only known from very late 18th century sources, so fermata practice might well have changed.

Finally, the Prelude in D BWV532, contains a fermata in bar 96 which happens to come before a time word:



Figure 3 – BWV532 bb.95ff

The fermata is placed on a chord V rather than the expected diminished 7th which is sounded a beat later. Assuming this is not a scribal error (perhaps resulting from transcription from German organ tablature), in this instance the fermata prepares for the harmonic surprise.

Another use, which is connected to the previous meaning, relates to a pause on the last note or chord of a piece. BWV825 shows a typical situation:



Figure 4 – BWV825/1 b.20ff

Even here, it is unclear whether it refers to a prolongation of the final chord or simply is a way of Bach telling the player that the piece has finished and not to turn the page. Of course in the cited example, the partita continues with another movement and so we can assume that in this instance it is simply a pause.

Another meaning relates to the issue of time signatures that Don Franklin continues to work on. He has found that Bach has the tendency to place fermata symbols on the final double barline itself, rather than on a note or chord. There is not enough space in this dissertation to discuss the topic in the detail it deserves but his musical example from the Goldberg variations BWV988 will serve the current purpose.

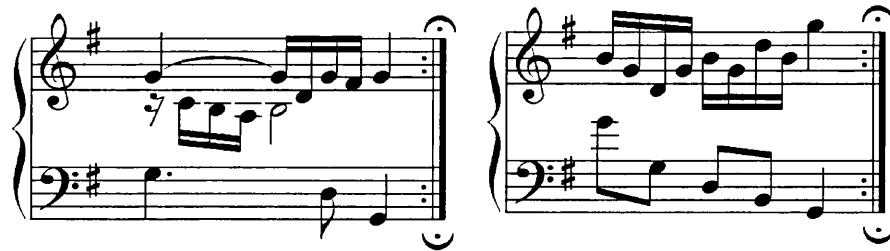


Figure 5 – BWV988/1 b.32 and BWV988/6 b.32

According to Franklin (1992), when Bach places a fermata on the final double barline of a movement, he is showing a break in tempo proportions that have hitherto been governing a sequence of movements:

Table 1 – Tempo Proportions in Bach’s Goldberg Variations BWV988

	Aria	Var. 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
				♩=♩	♩.=♩	♩=♩		♩=♩	♩.=♩
								<i>al tempo</i>	
								<i>di Giga</i>	
t.s.	3/4	3/4	2/4	12/8	3/8	3/4	3/8	6/8	3/4
n.l.									
dur.	96 ♩	96 ♩	64 ♩	96 ♩			48 ♩	96 ♩	
				128 ♩.	48 ♩	96 ♩		128 ♩.	96 ♩

Proportion	1:1	3:4	1:1	1:1	3:4
Dimension	2:3	2.66:1	1:2	1:2	4:3

	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
		♩=♩		♩.=♩			
							<i>andante</i>
t.s.	c	♩	12/16	3/4	3/4	3/4	2/4
n.l.							
dur.	128 ♩	64 ♩	128 ♩.	96 ♩	96 ♩	96 ♩	64 ♩

Prop.	1:2	3:4
Dim.	2:1	4:3

When Bach does not use the fermata, the temporal relationships between successive movements 2 – 5 are standard crotchet equals crotchet or variations on *proportion sesquialtera*. Bach’s use of proportion combined with metrical change, gives variations 2 – 5 a bipartite feel with 2 & 3 and 4 & 5 forming pairs which are linked by a common beat¹. In the case of the early cantata BWV 106 (although not transmitted in autograph sources), the use of the fermata on the last note of the

¹ Interestingly, the Bärenreiter edition of the Goldberg Variations BWV 988 places a fermata on the double barline of every single movement. The Peters edition reproduces the original application of the symbol.

sinfonia most likely has the same meaning as if it were on a double barline and here lies yet another area of confusion.

A third use of the fermata is as a general pause when all instruments and/or singers are silent for a period of time:

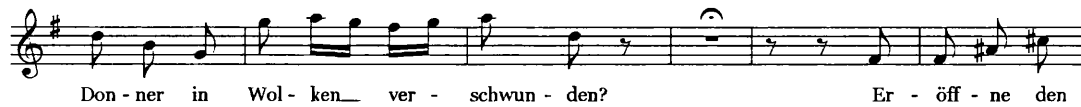


Figure 6 – BWV 244/33 b.101ff

In this example, does Bach refer to a G.P of the written-out length, a further holding of the rest, or does the fermata actually indicate a cancellation of the *Vivace* marking at the very start of the movement?

In France, composers knew the fermata symbol as a *point d'orgue*, although this label was also applied to a pedal point where the bass part held a long note while the upper parts continued to create a passage of harmonic tension followed by resolution to the final chord. BWV 847/2 shows a typical situation (note, however, that there is no fermata symbol to signal this particular *point d'orgue*):

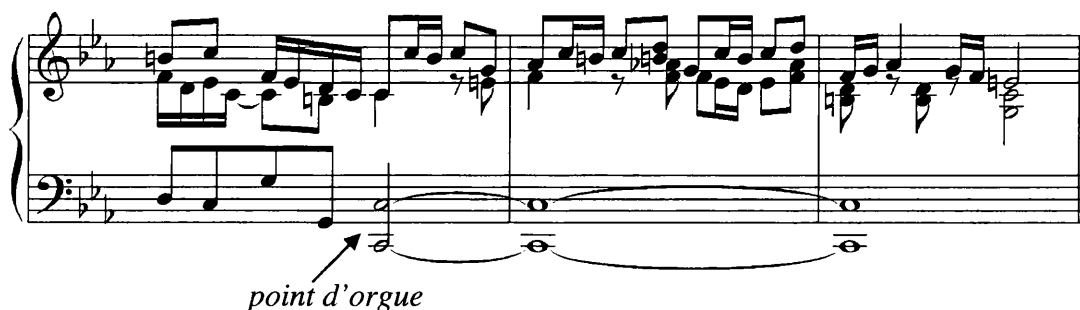


Figure 7 – BWV847/2 b.29ff

It is obvious that the two meanings of *point d'orgue* are closely related given that the pedal note example above is obviously a prolonged note to allow the upper parts to finish the final statement of the fugue subject.

A glance at the opening of the St John Passion shows yet another use of the fermata:



Figure 8 – BWV245/1 b.56ff

Here, the fermata indicates that on the repeat of the A section of the da capo ABA form, the players and singers should not continue onto the B section (This is entirely standard within Italianate da capo practice). Is this really just a visual cue or should the musicians treat the final chord as a prolongation? In addition, should the performers pause the first time they come across the signal? This is probably unlikely from other examples of basso continuo part, where, for instance, the music continues directly into the B section and the note with the pause is of short duration) Although these seem like fussy questions, they are important if we are to understand what the fermata meant to Bach. Should we be treating the fermata as a multi-faceted symbol or is there an underlying and unifying thread of truth to all its applications?

The penultimate use of the fermata is in canonic writing:



Figure 9 – BWV 769/2 b.22ff

Here, the fermata symbol in the original notation is an indicator for the left hand not to play past the signalled note since the right hand at this point will have reached the end of the piece. Finally, of course, there is the use of fermata in the chorale:

Herz - lieb - ster Je - su, was hast du ver - bro - chen, dass
man ein solch scharf Ur - teil hat ge - spro - chen? Was

Figure 10 – BWV244/3 b.1ff

From the above discussion, several preliminary questions emerge:

- Does the use of the fermata in the chorale relate to one or several of the other meanings discussed?
- Can all the multiple other meanings be drawn together by a common link or did Bach purposefully use the symbol for different meanings in different circumstances?

The use of the fermata in situations implying a definite pause, for example the passacaglia (see figure 1), is also not as clear cut as it might first seem. Perhaps the end result is the same (the apparent addition of extra beats to the bar to make room for the fermata note) but what is the symbol actually showing? Perhaps it is the lengthening of a note that, for other reasons, has been artificially shortened.



Figure 11 – hypothetical version of BWV 582 b.284ff without fermata

The Chorale as a Genre in 18th century Lutheran Germany

The congregational hymn of the German Protestant church service. Typically, it possesses certain formal and stylistic traits appropriate to its lay purposes: simple language, rhymed metrical verse, a strophic musical and textual form and an easily singable melody...

(Marshall, R & Leaver, R, 'Chorale', Grove Dictionary of Music
Online)

The chorale was designed as a unifying congregational response to the words of the pastor and the day's Gospel. Through the act of singing, people could praise God in communion with each other rather than as an individual 'sacramental act'. Originally called *geistliche Lieder* (spiritual songs), the *choral* as it was later known received its name from the Latin plainsong repertory (that continued in early Lutheran practice as *musica choralis*) and hence may hint at a unison singing in the first instance. Luther found inspiration for his melodies in the plainchant repertory and his texts were pre-Reformation and consisted of short sentences with many mono-syllabic words.

Out of Bach's 1,120 catalogued compositions, more than 450 of the works are chorale-based. It is clear that the chorale was a special source of inspiration for Bach throughout his life from the early Neumeister chorales, and finishing with works like the *Canonic Variations on Vom Himmel Hoch*. What is also worth noting is that for some of Bach's most inspirational works, the melodic content of the chorale is from the Lutheran tradition, but Bach's compositional technique transported these already spiritual "prayers" to new, different, artistic level through the daring harmonisations and/or by combining various techniques of composition (sometimes many at once, as

in BWV78), to great effect. In short, the chorales lie at the very heart of Bach's sacred vocal works in proclaiming the Lutheran faith and mark the culmination of the *Cantionalsatz* tradition.

Aside from congregational use as regular hymns and as separate movements within larger structures such as the oratorio and cantata, chorales were often the basis for other compositions such as the cantus firmus choruses, as part of solo arias, the chorale motet, the organ chorale prelude and other keyboard genres.

The performance practice involved in such hymn-singing is far from clear-cut. Many scholars are certain that chorales within the concerted cantatas, oratorios and passions were sung by the choir only (given the complexity of the parts) but the issue of congregational participation during non-concerted singing needs to be addressed. According to Peter Williams (2003, vol.3, pp.1 – 47), congregational singing in Lutheran Germany was going through a gradual transformation from unaccompanied singing to organ accompaniment which roughly paralleled the increasing number of hymns in circulation. The various methods of accompanying hymn singing can be listed as follows:

- No organ – hymns led by cantor or choir
- Organ Prelude and alternatim but no accompaniment of congregation's verses
- Organ Prelude, and full accompaniment and interline interludes
- As above with no interludes
- As above but with only a brief intonation from the organ.

Without congregational copies of the melody, it was necessary for the organist to play some or all of the chorale lines or a fughetta based on the hymn so that the congregation could start on the same note and pick up the melody. At the larger St Thomas church in Leipzig, the tradition was probably to sing the congregational hymns unaccompanied but a definite practice cannot be truly established. What can be certain is that on regular Sundays during the year, the organist would be required to prelude on the hymn tunes and provide organ-only chorales in-between communion hymns until everyone had received. Furthermore, there is evidence of Bach taking part in interline interludes during congregational singing judging from early compositions such as BWV725, 722 etc.. Such compositions, states Williams (vol.3 p.2), ‘cannot have arisen until the organ accompanied the congregation’s singing’. This however cannot account for Bach’s practices later in Leipzig, where congregational singing more likely remained unaccompanied with possible organ *alternatim* or interludes. There were also calls in 1650 and 1709 for organists to play every other verse or join in occasionally and quietly to keep pitch. However Türk (1787, p.8) commented that when organists did this, “it sounded unpleasant...because meanwhile the pitch had usually sunk a quarter or eighth of a tone”.

Hymnbooks

Important to the study of the fermata’s role within the chorale is an examination of the various hymnbooks known to have been used by Bach. At the wealthy court at Weimar, the *Gesangbuch* (1713) was the main source of hymns, and blackboards were often used to announce the hymn numbers. According to Williams (Vol.3, p.16), this could only mean one thing – that the congregation or a good percentage at least,

could read and had access to the same book used by the church musicians. In Leipzig, the extensive Wagner hymnbook of 1697 containing five thousand hymns, served as a reference to the many Lutheran melodies but it was more likely that Bach took the melodies from volumes like Vopelius (1682) and Freylinghausen (1704).

Depending on the source, hymnbook compilers had different ways of marking the end of the chorale line. Some used incises (16th century French *inciser* meaning to engrave), rests or longer note-values. Some used the start of the next line to indicate a new phrase by shortening the upbeat. The markings generally referred to a pause for breath and correspond with the rests in Scheidt's *Gorlitzer Tabulaturbuch* (1650). Unlike the colons in the English Book of Common Prayer's Coverdale psalter which often break up the natural flow of the line, the markings at the end of a line of music correspond with the end of a line of text, so a natural breath is encouraged.

The score of BWV715 demonstrates that chorale melodies were quite stately if we are to believe the literal notational differences between the crotchet tune and demisemiquavers. In addition, Kauffmann's *Harmonische Seelenlust* (Leipzig 1733) gives us evidence of inter-verse improvisation or decoration at a comparatively late date:

Secondly, there is to be found in each break a decorative passage, for such inexpert amateurs as have been described here are not in a position to do anything suitable at these points; yet to remain silent would be too bad. [trans. Williams]

Scheibe (1745) also discusses the varying of cadences within the verse and hence is probably by extension the proof that organists were adding decoration at the end of

each line too. BWV 715 is notated evidence of a younger Bach's involvement in such a practice even if this did not occur in his later post at Leipzig.

To conclude this section, it is evident that many aspects of organ-playing and hymn-singing in German Lutheran churches were changing, including prelude (length and texture), style of accompaniment in hymns, organ decoration inter-verse or inter-line, number of hymns, number of verses and matters of harmony. The following study of the fermata within the chorale should therefore take into consideration this diversity of practice.

Outline of Chapters

In the following chapter I will examine the literature on the subject so far as well as document performers' interpretations of fermatas in the organ works and sacred vocal works of J.S. Bach. In a subject area that still demands much attention, a major part of my review will consist not only of books and articles but also email conversations with various scholars and interviews with leading scholarly informed performers. In chapter two, I will analyse the notation of the chorale-based organ and sacred vocal works of J.S. Bach to try to ascertain the meanings behind a notated fermata. Chapter three will deal with non-Bach sources and in particular the sacred vocal works of Telemann to see if notational similarities shared between the two composers can shed light on the issue.

Chapter 1 - Literature Review

In terms of actual literature, Arthur Mendel (1951) was most probably the first person to actually draw attention to the issue of fermatas in the introduction to his edition of Bach's *St John Passion*². On pages xx – xxi he states that 'it was customary in congregational singing in the 17th- and 18th- centuries to prolong the final tone of each line in the hymns' to allow the organist to improvise a brief 'cadenza' leading into the next phrase. He draws attention to the first chorale (no.3) and a later harmonisation (no. 17) from the *Saint John Passion* which both use the same tune (Crüger) but use fermatas differently:



Figure 12 – BWV 245 nos. 3 & 17

Mendel assumes that by Bach's seemingly deliberate addition of an extra fermata on the fourth note, he expected the note to be prolonged for this important word (*Lieb*). In his next paragraph, Mendel concedes that fermatas could not always mean actual pauses due to the need for a continued rhythmic flow. He quotes an example from the *Orgelbüchlein* as an example of this. I agree with Mendel's conclusions that the fermata in these situations were notated more out of habit or convention but what I

² This edition has been superseded by Mendel's *Neue Bach-Ausgabe* publication

would take from this would be the fact that the different chorale genres would need to be considered separately for such a study to be productive. A fermata placed out of convention would not necessarily be a strong argument for *not* holding them in plain 4-part chorales (for example no.3 from the St John Passion). Mendel also quotes Schütz (in the introduction to his *Psalmen Davids*):

“For the rest, I have thought it better to use a little line at the end of each verse, instead of a pause, since of course in this sort of composition the pauses are not really observed.”

Mendel does not follow up with an analysis of this text but I believe that he used it as an argument for holding fermatas in chorales. The fact that Schütz felt that he had to explain his choice of notation (vertical line) for this style of composition (i.e. non-chorale genre) meant that pauses were used in compositions other than psalms *and* that a composer’s use of fermata in these instances meant a hold of some kind. Mendel concludes by stating that there is no definite answer to the question of the fermata and that Bach may well have held some fermatas and disregarded others.

David Schildkret (1988) poses many interesting questions though his thinking is quite problematic. He begins by acknowledging the various uses of the fermata according to Johann Gottfried Walther and he rightly concludes that the most ambiguous use is in the four-part chorale settings (and to this one might add the organ chorale preludes). He also acknowledges that at first glance there is conflicting evidence (he quotes *Da Jesus an dem Kreuze stund* and BWV726). As one will find later in this chapter, Schildkret accurately points out that performers have varied between holding all, not

holding, and everything in-between depending on the chorale text. I agree with Schildkret that fermata marks in chorales seem overly complex for something as simple as a breath mark. The words are simple enough in most cases to show clearly the end of a line and in any case, chorales in Bach's sacred vocal works normally only contained one verse so the need for a breath mark symbol would be diminished. Schildkret's main area of approach, and rightly so, is by way of the Lutheran hymnbooks. He describes the very awkward layout of the tune and multiple verses of text and how a vertical stroke in the middle of the staff combined with a diagonal stroke in the text combined to aid the reader in matching music with the words. He also states that around the end of the sixteenth century, printers began to use full barlines. This is evident in collections like Schemelli's *Musicalisches Gesangbuch* (in which Bach was involved):



Figure 13 – Schemelli Songbook no. 627 b.10ff

What is also interesting in this song is the fact that a continuo note in the second line of music is tied over the end of a textual phrase and also in the third line the run of four quavers makes anything more than a quick breath difficult. However, it would be wrong in this context to compare these songs in too much detail with traditional chorales since the Schemelli collection is for solo voice rather than congregational unison singing *en masse*. Schildkret charts the development of the fermata from the need for clarification of metre and hence the fermata symbol was used as a

replacement for the short and full vertical strokes which were now indistinguishable from regular bar lines. I can accept all of these statements, but what Schildkret takes for granted is that even the short vertical strokes meant nothing other than breath marks. He seems to ignore the evidence of organ preluding and inter-verse / inter-line decoration. Schildkret's assumption that Bach merely included fermatas in his vocal scores as a matter of course (with no musical information intended) is hard to swallow. First, if we accept Schildkret's assumption to be correct, the very presence of fermata symbols would alert a baroque musician to the nature of the piece and would in all probability indicate a suitable speed to conduct the piece. In the case of the organ preludes this could have been especially true as the tempo could have been taken from the required speed of the sung chorale line. However, if one remembers that Bach's position in Leipzig was *Cantor*, there is a very good chance that after the organ preluding, Bach vocally intoned the chorale in a fresh start. I can accept that when 19th-century musicians re-discovered Bach's works, the fermata must have meant only one thing – a hold. I will return to this point later but I have to question, given Schildkret's convincing view of hymnbook transformation, why printers or composers decided to use the fermata symbol purely as a marker for the end of a line if indeed a pause was not intended, given the symbol's use as a hold in so many other situations. Perhaps seeing the fermata in its role in canonic writing and to show the end of a da capo aria may give a clue as to the symbol's appropriateness in this situation. What is also troubling is the fact that the fermata appears over the note and not the barline as it did previously. Perhaps the fermata symbol was chosen because it best showed congregational practice of slow singing with time for breathing in-between lines. Bach's *Orgelbüchlein* examples of chorale with decoration in-between lines are testament to this. There is also something to be learnt from the fact that

composers found it so easy to break the chorale into separate lines (often with many bars before the next entry of the cantus firmus).

Robin Leaver (2005, email, 17 November) firmly believes in Schildkret's conclusions. He outlined his view that the chorale fermata did not mean the same as in other instances but may well have significance as a visual signpost in the da capo situation (one that does not imply a relaxation of tempo). He states that Lutheran hymnals used the short and full vertical strokes to denote a slight breath rather than a hold. The fermata (presumably for the same reasons suggested by Schildkret) took on this responsibility and therefore in the sacred vocal works and in the organ preludes it denotes a marking of the end of the musical line and, if appropriate, a slight breath.

Ton Koopman (2003) in an interview with Uri Golomb for Goldberg Magazine stated that he believed very strongly in not holding fermatas after carrying out some independent research. He agrees with David Schildkret's conclusions in the BACH journal article but adds further evidence in the form of the *Orgelbüchlein* where running semiquavers do not allow for a pause in the chorale melody line. He also draws the same conclusions from looking at the concerted chorales in the early cantatas where running instrumental figures cross over the two phrases of a chorale. It is all well and good to draw such conclusions using the sacred vocal works but to use the organ works as a justification of Bach's choral practices is not unconditionally valuable. It is important to realise the connection between organ preluding and chorale singing but as they are two different genres an acknowledgment must be made that the chorale prelude's function was to introduce the singing and not accompany it. Therefore the organ prelude does not necessarily need to contain nuances that were of

a purely vocal nature. In addition, one must be careful about using early cantatas and early organ volumes as proof of Bach's Leipzig practices. As discussed in the previous section, chorale singing was going through major changes and every church picked up these changes at different times and in different ways. Koopman also quotes one of Bach's organ students (Koopman thinks it is Agricola but he is not sure) as saying that Bach didn't like organists who introduced runs and ornaments at the end of chorale lines. First of all, we are unclear as to whether the student is referring to chorale accompaniment or organ prelude. If it is the latter, this seems contradicted by the evidence that Bach himself took part in such practices:



Figure 14 – BWV715 b.1ff

This is an early work and, as commented upon above, it would be wrong to assume that Bach maintained this view throughout his life. If the student is referring to chorale accompaniment, as Williams points out, the above example of BWV715 could not have come about before inter-line decoration became practice. Again, this may well have been the case in Weimar but we must be careful about applying this evidence to Leipzig practice. To conclude, Koopman's observations of the early cantatas do warrant investigation (Chapter 2) as does the meaning of the fermata in an organ chorale prelude context in terms of whether the symbol is merely a signpost that was copied at the time of writing out the chorale melody.

Robert Marshall (1972) in *The Compositional Process of J.S. Bach* gives a detailed account into how the composer wrote his four-part chorales. In one of his footnotes, he acknowledges Arthur Mendel for sketching the problem in the introduction of his 1951 St John Passion score and recommends that *'future attempts to resolve the fermata question should respect such obvious subdivisions within the chorale genre as organ or choral setting, simpler four-part harmonization or one with obbligato instruments and interludes. Such studies should also take into account the date of composition, manuscript evidence, and pertinent testimony on contemporary practice'*. His reason for mentioning fermatas lies in his analysis of BWV65/7 and Bach's re-notation of the passage. As Marshall perceives it, Bach wrote out the first ten bars [Stollen] of the chorale's melody and then bass line. For the *Abgesang*, Bach wrote out the first bar of both the melody and bass and then continued to write out the majority of the melody until he realised that the final note would not be on the third beat (to match the upbeat of the chorale).

The image displays three systems of musical notation for BWV 65/7, measures 11 through 15. Each system consists of two staves: a treble clef staff (top) and a bass clef staff (bottom). The first system shows measures 11 and 12. The second system shows measures 13 and 14. The third system shows measures 15 and 16. The notation includes various note values (quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes), rests, and fermatas. The original version is shown in the first system, and the revised version is shown in the second and third systems. The revised version shows a change in the melody's phrasing and the placement of fermatas to better align with the chorale's structure.

Figure 15 – BWV65/7 b.11ff showing original and revised version

To correct this, he rebarred the melody in bar 13 by changing the dotted minim under the fermata to a crotchet under a fermata. In Marshall's eyes, this showed that for Bach beats 1 & 3 and 2 & 4 were interchangeable, but more importantly for this study that a fermata crotchet and a fermata dotted minim could indeed be the same length for Bach. Marshall also uses BWV105 as another example of rebaring due to added instrumental interludes (surely paralleling the practice of organ interluding) but it is interesting that the two stollen are also barred differently further substantiating the idea that metre for Bach did not imply accentuation:



Figure 16 – BWV105 b.1ff showing original and revised barring

Marshall is convincing in his judgement of Bach's treatment of fermatas but BWV105 is problematic if the fermatas are to be seen as holds. However, Marshall's footnote makes it clear that he sees BWV105 and other obbligato chorales as potentially separate from the simpler choir-only versions. This will be further explored in chapter two.

I have been very lucky in managing to have in-depth conversations with Joshua Rifkin (2005/2006, email, 23-24 November, 28 April) on this subject. He firmly believes in holding notes under fermatas in straight chorales and has also experimented in live performance with holds in obbligato chorales such as BWV12 and BWV172. He, like Mendel, pointed me in the direction of the first chorale of the

Saint John Passion and also to two chorale settings of 'O Traurigkeit' written out by Bach for a passion he believed to be by Keiser which uses in one instance minim beats without fermatas and in the other, crotchets with fermatas. Of course, when two different notational conventions exist it is easy to suggest that the two must be equivalent in performance and that comparing the two versions side by side will give a true representation of not only what the fermata meant but also an idea of how chorales were performed in general. I will return to this particular chorale later in this study. Rifkin also states that, with regard to the organ-based chorales, Bach more often than not entered the chorale melody in first (with fermata marks) before adding the accompanying figuration. This would substantiate Mendel's findings that for Bach, the fermata in these instances were visual markers more than anything else. He also points out that as far as he is aware, BWV12 and 172 are the earliest cantatas to include 'crotchet' chorales and hence may well be representative of a transitional phase in Bach's notational habits.

Bernard D. Sherman (1999) in *Gramophone Early Music* wrote a review of Suzuki's BIS recording of Bach's St John Passion. He comments that Suzuki varies chorale speeds depending on the sentiment of the text but more importantly that he, unlike some other early music conductors, varies the performance of the fermata depending on the word or sentence that it is attached to. He gives the example of the first chorale with the fermata over the word 'love' (*lieb*) which Suzuki extends 'for multiple beats'. He concludes that while this approach may not be historically accurate, it gives a convincing feel to the performance. In the website version I read, Sherman gives a link to another part of the page in which he documents why fermatas, in his view, should be acknowledged as holds. He lists Joshua Rifkin, Kenneth Slowik, and René

Jacobs as conductors who take this approach. He mentions Marshall's re-barring of BWV65/7 but also lays out Rifkin's views on the practices of Bach's contemporaries in relation to the ends of each chorale line and the associated metrical difficulties of not using a fermata. In summary, Sherman is a firm believer in held fermatas but as his explanation shows, he is merely summarising the views of Marshall and Rifkin.

Peter Williams in volume III of 'The Organ Music of J.S. Bach' writes a section entitled 'Certain Details of Performance: Finals, Fermatas and Repeats'. Although a lot of the section refers to non-chorale based works, it is still useful to know his conclusions. He begins by commenting on the apparent shortness of certain final chords such as BWV547.ii and points that while it seems to 'offend musical common sense', perhaps the notation is implying a *rallentando*. He goes on to suggest that in examples like BWV544.ii, the final chord of a minim plus fermata does not feel right being held for three or more beats (however as he points out in a previous paragraph, such feelings may well be anachronistic). His most interesting point concerns the *Orgelbüchlein* in which he observes that Bach 'does not write fermatas when there are repeat marks or second-time bars, even to mark chorale-melody lines...' One of his possible conclusions is that the fermatas were only end-signs (visual signposts) which were unnecessary when repeat dots are involved.

Performance of the Organ Works and Sacred Vocal Works

Although not strictly a comprehensive literature review, I felt that it was important to survey the recorded output of various Bach interpreters and hence appendix A,

presents a table documenting the various ways that twelve conductors perform the first chorale which appears in the Saint John Passion.

In terms of organ works, I do not know of any recordings when the performer holds notes under fermatas longer than notated while other parts contain running semi-quavers, but often the start of the new chorale line is preceded by a very slight retardation of the underlying parts. Often too, the end of the chorale is marked by a lift in the underlying parts while the fermata note is played, even if there is no retardation:



Figure 17 – BWV 601 b.2

To conclude this section, I will formulate various questions based on the initial literature review in order to give direction to the rest of the study. As Mendel and others point out, fermatas in the various genres deserve to be looked at individually and hence I will examine the organ and vocal works separately. I will also be sure to make clear which sub-genre of chorale-based work is being discussed (e.g. obligato chorale versus straight chorale) to facilitate the drawing of conclusions. Is there any evidence of written-out fermatas (i.e. notated longer notes in place of using fermatas) in Bach's chorale-based works? Are fermata marks in the organ works impossible to perform as holds with the underlying semi-quaver movement? Is there any

chronological aspect to Bach's level of compositional integration of the chorale melody and move from minim to crotchet notation? Do the instrumental parts of the chorale accompaniment contain any clues to the performance of the vocal lines? Do the works of other baroque composers suggest useful meanings for the performance of fermatas? By examining the works of Bach and some of his contemporaries, can a reliable system for fermata performance be obtained?

Chapter 2 – Examining the Bach Chorale-based Works

The Organ Works

As stated in the previous section, the study of the fermata in the organ works, while a worthy topic in its own right must, in this instance, not be seen as giving us the complete answer. The organ works should shed light on the practices in the vocal genres but without necessarily reducing the fermata symbol to a single meaning. As seen in the previous chapter, scholars and performers have suggested that the symbol used within the organ works is most likely a purely visual signpost – a symbol that tells the player or reader that the genre is chorale-based and hence that the line should be brought out whether through declamation or choice of solo stops. Was Bach's addition of fermatas a deliberate afterthought or an unconscious by-product of the initial copying-out of the melody line? Of course, the inclusion of fermatas depended on which hymnbook Bach copied the melody from or indeed in the case of secondary sources, if the copyist superimposed his notational habits. Following Koopman's (2003) arguments about the flow of underlying notes in certain chorales, it should not be difficult to find out if it is valid to treat the fermata as a hold.

In the second full bar of BWV601 (see figure 17), the fermata over the F#, from Koopman's point of view, combined with the semi-quavers in the alto and tenor would mean that the fermata crotchet must continue immediately into the next beat. If one was argue for a hold, the fact that the notes directly under the fermata are consonant (F# minor chord) means that theoretically the player could hold all the

notes under the fermata and later move to the remaining three semiquavers of the beat.

Lobt Gott, ihr Christen, allzugleich BWV609 is more problematic in this respect:



Figure 18 – BWV609 b.2

In the second bar, the notes directly under the fermata add up to a G major chord with a suspended 9th from the previous D major chord. Here, pausing on the first semiquaver of the beat would have a very unsettling effect which would also go against the strict maximum length of the suspension note in relation to its preparation note. Although the conclusion not to hold the fermata in these instances seems natural, there is something unsettling about the placement of fermatas not only on the chorale line but also occasionally in the pedal part too.

While Bach's reasons (conscious or otherwise) for placing a fermata in the bass part are unclear, it certainly becomes more confusing in the case of BWV 600 which involves a canon between soprano and pedal part. Although a more likely candidate for unconscious notating of the fermata, here Bach only notates the fermatas in the soprano. However, in BWV 634, Bach adds the fermata also to the alto part which is in canon with the soprano at the fifth:



Figure 19 – BWV634 b.1ff

In the above example, what is also interesting and ties in with what Peter Williams describes, is Bach's practice of missing out the fermata at repeat bar lines. Although the absence of the fermata may point to the double bar line taking care of any meaning originally held by the symbol, because this also occurs in vocal chorales, it would be too early to comment on this finding. If the fermata's introduction into choral books is as a consequence of the short vertical strokes becoming full barlines, as suggested by Schildkret, the situation with the fermata and repeat marks in sacred vocal music could still imply a hold of the note. In BWV633, however, both fermata and repeat marks are used. In BWV644, there are no fermata marks, save for the final note. An inconsistent picture is emerging: in many of the chorale-based works, tight integration of the chorale melody in forms such as canon, fughetta or trio, generally means a lack of fermata as signifier. However, as BWV644 shows, even in more straightforward examples with the chorale tune in the soprano part (and relatively plain), Bach (or the copyist, Krebs) did not use fermatas in this instance.

Inter-line flourishes can be seen in Orgelbüchlein's BWV614 to a certain degree:

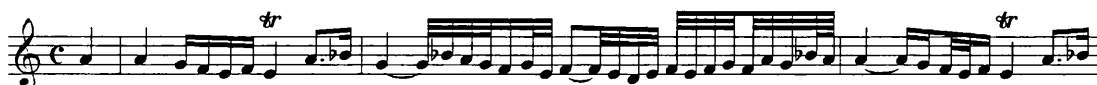


Figure 20 – BWV614 b.1ff

BWV715 certainly makes a feature of this and causes Williams to comment that this chorale setting and others ‘appear to be an accompanimental movement for congregational use’ (see figure 14).

However, he goes on to claim that the enhanced chromaticisms in the chorale melody line itself might mitigate against such a practice. In addition, Williams finds that at cadences, note values are freely altered. However, if this indeed is a solo organ chorale [prelude] in its own right, it does not mean that this kind of arrangement was not inspired by similar congregational singing. BWV722 appears to be closer to a congregational use with interline runs which connect phrases together and on the whole is less chromatically daring than BWV715. Other chorale settings which make heavy use of inter-line flourishes include BWV729, BWV726, BWV732 and BWV738a with its much more regimented runs of semi-quavers with the feel of a 12/8 bar:



Figure 21 – BWV738a opening

As discussed earlier in this study, the above chorale settings with flourishes point towards the practice of congregational pauses, or large gaps at least, between each phrase for whatever reason. Another feature which also points towards this practice can be easily seen in the most famous of the so-called Schübler Chorale settings BWV645. In this cantus firmus setting, the chorale melody lines are separated by long

stretches of the RH tune. This compositional layout combined with the flourishes of the individually transmitted chorales and longer notes at the endings of chorale lines in many of the chorale-based organ works all point to one thing – that there was a tradition for treating chorales line by line. Put in other words, a vocal trend for large breaths or pauses in between textual lines must have been practised for organists to compose and play in such a fashion. Perhaps Bach's organ playing also influenced his cantata writing in such instances as *Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben* BWV 147 with its long compound dance figurations in between vocal phrases or indeed the cantata version of BWV645.

Can the above information be analysed chronologically to give a clearer idea of how Bach's treatment of chorale lines changed, if at all? The *Orgelbüchlein* (BWV599 – 644) can be dated with some certainty to before 1717 with some of the compositions as early as 1713, if not before. Arfken (1966) claimed that comparing the bass line to the chorale melody suggested an order of composition, the first compositions being those whose bass line ending coincided with that of the chorale and the later pieces being those with bass cadences independent of the chorale line endings. As Williams points out, perhaps this was not so much a timeline but more that the composer wanted to vary the style in general. In surveying the *Orgelbüchlein*, a question returns from the general section on the chorale. What are organ chorale preludes used for? Are they literally preludes to congregational hymns, interludes between verses (alternatim style) or are they voluntaries to be played at the beginning or end of a service? The length of the majority of the *Orgelbüchlein* pieces coupled with the simple declamation of the chorale melody in general, may suggest inter-verse use but more likely they were preludes to the singing. Perhaps, though, these miniatures could

be seen as snapshots of an extempore style of alternatim practice in which the organist would vary his verse each time.

The Schübler Chorale settings are much later and are thought to be around 1748. Almost certainly these are organ arrangements of cantata chorales and not vice versa (Williams 2003) with the possible exception of 'Wo soll ich fliehen hin' BWV646. Characterised by their distinctive prelude – interludes – postlude, their evolution can be harkened from the cantatas. Compared to the *Orgelbüchlein* settings, these are large scale expositions of Chorale melodies which certainly highlight the differences between Leipzig cantata singing practice and the Weimar-based settings.

The other organ works cited in this section are in the individually transmitted chorales and the chorale settings with flourishes (e.g. BWV715). Christoph Wolff (*Grove Music Online*) claims that they originated from the Arnstadt period (1703 – 1707) when Bach was criticised for long interludes in chorales and for too bold and chromatic harmonisation.

A chronological picture appears as follows:

Neumeister Chorales

'Arnstadt' Chorales / chorale variations / partitas

Orgelbüchlein

The '18'

Clavier Übung III

Vom Himmel Hoch variations

Schübler Chorales

It is certainly true that the Neumeister chorale settings hint towards the *Orgelbüchlein* in terms of development of canonic writing and simpler statement of chorale in the soprano. However, there is also a freer compositional element found in these pieces which resulted in multi-sectional thinking. Fermatas in this collection are few and far between but nevertheless, comparisons may be drawn between it and the *Orgelbüchlein*. The cluster of 'inter-line flourish' chorales early in Bach's career may point towards a shift to accompanied congregational singing in the smaller churches while the traditional cities like Leipzig were slow to follow. It certainly seems as if there is a general shift in Bach's organ compositions from small-scale organ preludes or inter-verse improvisations to full-scale pieces capable of becoming purely organ preludes or even voluntaries.

To conclude this section, it remains clear that the study of fermatas within the organ works can be used to inform our understanding of vocal practices to a certain degree. Organ composition was designed for the church liturgy and from surveying the organ works of Bach, it is clear that chorale singing had an effect on the way composers wrote chorale accompaniments and their associated preludes. While one may never be able to prove exactly what congregational practice was like in Bach's churches, the organ works, through their varying treatment of the individual chorale lines, allow us to gain a glimpse of it and perhaps also of the more specialised singing of Bach's Weimar and Leipzig choirs.

The Vocal Works

The organ works of Bach show that the composer used the chorale melody in many different ways to achieve a unified composition. If one learns to treat the two polar opposites of chorale-based organ composition as separate sub-genres i.e. *fughetta* style and straight chorale with inter-line flourishes, it follows that the same respect should be shown to the vocal chorale-based genres. For the purposes of this study, I perceive three chorale variants. Firstly there is the straight chorale, accompanied or unaccompanied e.g. the first chorale of the Saint John Passion, secondly, concerted chorales with larger-scale instrumental introductions, interludes and postludes e.g. BWV147 and finally cantus firmus chorale movements such as the opening of the Matthew Passion for double choir with soprano ripieno singing the chorale melody. While it would be easy to justify results to the fermata problem by taking each of these sub-genres separately, as Ton Koopman has in the organ works, a fuller picture of the chorale can be gained only by viewing all these genres together.

To return to Marshall (1970) briefly, Bach's re-barring of the chorale melody of BWV65 on discovery that the final note would not rest on the correct beat is both enlightening and at the same time confusing. Such a compositional process by Bach can be seen to prove that different notes under a fermata could have the same temporal value and that beats one & three and two & four were obviously seen as equal in status. However, this seems unsettling next to the actual object of the re-barring exercise which was to make sure that the bars and any upbeat added up. Surely Bach could have finished the original barring of the melody with a dotted minim under a fermata to complement the initial upbeat:



Figure 22 – BWV65/7 hypothetical barring

This use of a dotted minim for the final note is perfectly common in his other chorale harmonisations and therefore something else must have caused Bach to re-bar in such a way. Perhaps this study will shed further light on this issue but at this stage, a possible reason could be that for Bach the placement of notes on beats *did* matter and that he changed the barring to enable a large upbeat feel of three crotchets on three occasions. This is also supported by the fact that the highest note occurs on the first beat of the bar in two instances but also because the tonic is heard on this beat. More exploration needs to be done in this area but there is one thing that is certain – this re-barring exercise, for whatever reason, confirms that changing note values under a fermata did not necessarily change the actual sounding length of the note.

I also return to the first chorale that appears in the Saint John Passion. As Mendel (1951) and Rifkin (2005) point out, such a placement of a fermata in the middle of a chorale line must have had a particularly special meaning. Comparing nos. 7 and 27 from the work confirms that the later verse does not include a fermata. A hold on such an important word as *Lieb* (love) acts not only to highlight the individual word but also acts as a reflection on the first phrase *O große Lieb* (O great Love). While such a

chorale seems to provide further evidence of the fermata as a holding symbol, it is also worth noting that the text of the first line includes repetition *O große Lieb, o Lieb alle Maße* (including comma) which would suggest a lift or break but not necessarily a hold. However, in no.27, the text *Ach großer König, groß zu allen Zeiten* also includes repetition and a comma but Bach does not include a fermata at this point. Therefore it seems clear that no.7 for Bach represented a special diversion from the musical line to accentuate the text at this point.

A manuscript source³ for BWV2 *Ach Gott vom Himmel, sieh darein* seems to provide further evidence of the fermata as a hold:



Figure 23 – BWV2 final chorale – soprano and trombone parts

³ http://www.bachleipzig.de/main_deutsch/bibliothek/menu/bachdigital/start_text.html

Not only are there fermata marks in the vocal parts but the copyist (JA Kuhnau?) also puts marks into the instrumental accompaniment too. As the instrumentalists did not require a text, why would they need a fermata if it wasn't to show a hold? Again, while this may provide proof that the instrumentalists had to be aware of a pause at this point, perhaps the copyist simply copied the vocal parts onto the instrumental staves and in "copyist" mode also notated the fermatas. There is an instance in the first phrase of the chorale for the 2nd violin part where the scribe did not write a fermata but this may well have been an oversight due to the fact that he puts in every other one. What is also interesting is that he does not put fermatas at repeat signs (as noticed by Williams) but also, in BWV 2 at least, the copyist does not write fermatas on the last note either. The oboe line does have a faint mark which closely resembles a fermata (drawn in one stroke, starting with the point moving to the line without removing the pen). What is also hard to accept is that while copying, the scribe would have moved his pen above the stave to write in a fermata mark that didn't need to be there.

According to the New Grove Dictionary of Music (1980, vol 1, p.809) Bach made a copy of a Saint Mark Passion which he thought to be by Keiser in Weimar before 1714 adding among other things two chorale harmonisations of the hymn 'O Traurigkeit' and 'O hilf, Christe, Gottes Sohn'. A later Leipzig version of 1726 exists in Bach's hand and crucially, these chorale harmonisations are provided in two differing notations:



Figure 24 – Two ‘Keiser’ passion chorales in differing notation

The earliest ones (1712 according to the NBA) use minims with fermatas coupled with minim rests and the later ones (1726) use crotchets with fermatas (like most of Bach’s chorales). Can these examples shed light on the meaning behind Bach’s fermata? According Glöckner, it is clear from the Weimar source of Bach’s copy of the passion that the composer was neither purely copyist or purely arranger. It is also clear that Bach provided his own chorale harmonisations and so it seems that the 1712 and 1726 sources provide a comparison of Bach’s own notation of chorales between his early Weimar days and Leipzig days. The two versions of ‘O hilf, Christe, Gottes Sohn’ provide alternative harmonisations with more inner motion in the later version but what is most interesting is the way the composer has notated the original melodies of these two chorales. An analysis of the first ‘O hilf’ shows that Bach uses fermata semibreves for all final notes of cadences (apart from the very final chord which is notated in the manuscript as a breve). The second uses fermata minims always occurring on the third crotchet beat of the bar. The first version of ‘O Traurigkeit’ uses the same fermata semibreves which are sometimes followed by a minim rest

allowing the next phrase to begin with an upbeat. The second version using crotchet notation uses a mixture of fermata crotchets on the third beat of the bar (allowing the next phrase to begin with an upbeat) and fermata minims on the third beat. Interestingly, the first version begins with a minim rest, therefore starting with a complete first bar allowing Bach to finish the movement with another full bar. In the later version, however, the crotchet upbeat which begins the chorale means that Bach must write a fermata crotchet as the last note for the beats to add up. As a side issue, it is also to be noted that although the NBA in its typeset version of the earlier 'O Traurigkeit' uses a 'cut C' time signature, the original manuscript uses a regular C with the word *allabreve* to designate the beat to the minim (or strictly the breve). Are the two different notations actually calling for the same performance or did Bach's performance of the chorale change over time? Because 'O hilf' uses a text made up of seven-syllable lines, the natural accents of the words work best with no upbeat, whereas the text of 'O Traurigkeit' demands an upbeat. This explains the latter's use of minim rests in the earlier notation. If we are to assume that the two sets of notations provide the same end result, the following conclusions can be drawn:

A fermata semibreve followed by minim rest \equiv fermata crotchet on the third beat

Even with the above assumptions, drawing any further conclusions becomes difficult. In the third phrase of 'O Traurigkeit', does the fermata semibreve without a following minim rest (due to textual accent) denote that there was no performed rest in this instant? 'O hilf' only contains such cadences and therefore did the fermata over the last note of a cadence not imply a hold at all? If there was to be a gap between the phrases of 'O hilf', seeing as Bach seemed to be particular about maintaining beats 1

& 3 and 2 & 4, perhaps the fermata semibreve in this instance involved holding a note for 3 minims followed by a minim rest. Maintaining the system as shown in the first phrase of 'O Traurigkeit' in 'O hilf' would certainly create a sense of uneasiness with the downbeat feeling like an upbeat. Another slim possibility would be that the fermata semibreve was actually performed as a single minim with minim rest, but this could have quite easily been notated as such without destroying the metre. To conclude discussion on these two chorales for now, if it is assumed that the two notations are telling the same story then the first phrase of 'O Traurigkeit' gives compelling evidence that a crotchet under a fermata was indeed held longer than notated.

There are other examples of Bach writing in minims for cantata chorales as late as 1731 – 'Wachet Auf' BWV140 is one example:

Vers 3. CHORAL.
(Melodie: „Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme“)

The image shows a musical score for the final movement of BWV 140, 'Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme'. It features five vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor 1, Tenor 2, Bass) and a basso continuo line. The lyrics are: 'Glo-ri-a sei dir ge-sun-gen mit Men-schen-und eng-li-schen Von zwölf Per-len sind die Pfor-ten an dei-ner Stadt; wir sind Con-'. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. The lyrics are printed below the vocal staves, and the basso continuo line is at the bottom.

Figure 25 – BWV 140 final movement b.1ff

In this instance the heavy use of movement in the lower part may well have tempered the speed at which the chorale was performed and hence Bach may have deliberately chosen minim notation. Also, the notation of verse 2 (cantus firmus) is also in minims to allow for the quavers in the prelude, interludes and postlude. If fermatas were holds, however, why then did Bach notate fermatas *and* minim rests? Could he not have notated a minim under a fermata and continued the phrase in the second half of the same bar? In addition, why did Bach combine fermata semibreve plus minim rest with fermata minim in the same chorale? Did he want a certain number of bars (Ruth Tatlow's work suggests yes)? BWV119 is similar in that it uses minims, rests and fermatas:

CHORAL.

The image shows a musical score for a four-part chorale. The title is "CHORAL." and the parts are labeled Soprano, Alto, Tenore, and Basso. The lyrics are in German. The first system of music shows the beginning of the chorale, with the lyrics: "Hilf dei - nem Volk, Herr Je - su Christ, und seg - ne das dein Erbtheil ist. Wart'". The second system continues the lyrics: "und pfleg' ihr' zu al - ler Zeit und heb' sie hoch in E - wig - keit. A - - - - - men." The notation includes various note values, rests, and fermatas, particularly in the vocal lines.

Soprano.
Hilf dei - nem Volk, Herr Je - su Christ, und seg - ne das dein Erbtheil ist. Wart'

Alto.
Hilf dei - nem Volk, Herr Je - su Christ, und seg - ne das dein Erbtheil ist. Wart'

Tenore.
Hilf dei - nem Volk, Herr Je - su Christ, und seg - ne das dein Erbtheil ist. Wart'

Basso.
Hilf dei - nem Volk, Herr Je - su Christ, und seg - ne das dein Erbtheil ist. Wart'

und pfleg' ihr' zu al - ler Zeit und heb' sie hoch in E - wig - keit. A - - - - - men.

und pfleg' ihr' zu al - ler Zeit und heb' sie hoch in E - wig - keit. A - - - - - men.

und pfleg' ihr' zu al - ler Zeit und heb' sie hoch in E - wig - keit. A - - - - - men.

und pfleg' ihr' zu al - ler Zeit und heb' sie hoch in E - wig - keit. A - - - - - men.

Figure 26 – BWV119 final chorale

Could Bach not have written it out in crotchets as follows?:



Figure 27 – BWV119 hypothetical crotchet notation

The end of the second line is also puzzling because of the addition of two minim rests after the fermata. In a similar fashion, the final chorale of BWV148 contains crotchet notation with fermatas but also with a crotchet rest after the fermata:

CHORAL.

Soprano. [Führ' auch mein Herz und Sinn durch dei - nen Geist da - hin, dass ich mög' al - les mei - den, was
 Alto. [Führ' auch mein Herz und Sinn durch dei - nen Geist da - hin, dass ich mög' al - les meiden, was
 Tenore. [Führ' auch mein Herz und Sinn durch dei - nen Geist da - hin, dass ich mög' al - les meiden, was
 Basso. [Führ' auch mein Herz und Sinn durch dei - nen Geist da - hin, dass ich mög' al - les meiden, was
 Continuo. [Führ' auch mein Herz und Sinn durch dei - nen Geist da - hin, dass ich mög' al - les meiden, was

mich und dich kann schei - den, und ich an dei - nem Lei - be ein Glied - mass e - wig blei - be.]
 mich und dich kann schei - den, und ich an dei - nem Lei - be ein Glied - mass e - wig blei - be.]
 mich und dich kann schei - den, und ich an dei - nem Lei - be ein Glied - mass e - wig blei - be.]
 mich und dich kann schei - den, und ich an dei - nem Lei - be ein Glied - mass e - wig blei - be.]

B. W. XXX.

Figure 28 – BWV148 final chorale

If one finds an alternative harmonisation of this chorale in Bach's output in BWV89, the crotchet rests have disappeared in favour of a dotted minim under a fermata:

CHORAL. Melodie: „Auf meinen lieben Gott.“

Soprano.
Oboe I. II. Corno.
Violino I. col Soprano.
Mir man gelt zwar sehr viel, doch, was ich ha - ben will, ist

Alto.
Violino II. col Alto.
Mir man gelt zwar sehr viel, doch, was ich ha - ben will, ist

Tenore.
Viola col Tenore.
Mir man gelt zwar sehr viel, doch, was ich ha - ben will, ist

Basso.
Mir man gelt zwar sehr viel, doch, was ich ha - ben will, ist

Continuo.

Figure 29 – BWV89 final chorale b.1ff

The implications of these two harmonisations are troubling. In the same way that, according to Marshall, a crotchet under a fermata was equal in temporal value to a dotted minim under a fermata, here it would initially seem that a fermata minim plus crotchet rest was equal to a dotted minim under a fermata. However, with these two cantatas both being written in 1723 (BWV89 performed a month later than BWV148) it seems unlikely that both notations meant the same thing, unless Bach was experimenting with how he wrote out chorales at this stage in his career. Could the rests present in BWV148 in fact be a reaction to the text? In this way, was the written-out crotchet rest an addition to the rest implied as part of the fermata note?

Again in both the harmonisations, Bach uses both dotted minim under fermata (or minim plus crotchet rest) with fermata crotchet. If these two cadences are the same, why did Bach write them like this? If Bach had continued to use dotted minims (in the case of BWV89) he would have run into trouble with placement of the strong beat:



Figure 30 – BWV89 notation using dotted minim fermatas

As shown above, tying fermata notes over a barline was unacceptable to Bach and he therefore decided to use fermata crotchets to maintain the 4th crotchet upbeat which follows.

Concerted Chorales such as BWV22, 147 and 248 should be treated apart from the straight chorale as the integration of the chorale into a larger instrumental structure, a sub-genre of its own. In the case of BWV147, there is evidence (as in some of the organ works) of written-out holds:

A musical score for BWV147, 'Je - sus weh - ret al - lem Lei - de, Je - sus light - ens all my trou - bles'. It consists of five staves. The first four staves are vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) with lyrics written below them. The fifth staff is the piano accompaniment. The score includes a repeat sign with a first ending bracket and a fermata over the final note of the first ending. The piano part features a complex, rhythmic accompaniment with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes.

er ist mei - - nes Le - bens Kraft,
through His love's re - deem - ing might.

er ist mei - - nes Le - bens Kraft,
through His love's re - deem - ing might.

er ist mei - - nes Le - bens Kraft,
through His love's re - deem - ing might.

er ist mei - - nes Le - bens Kraft,
through His love's re - deem - ing might.

Figure 31 – BWV147 final mvt b.9ff

This fact combined with the separation of the chorale lines into more individual interpolations reinforces a tradition of gaps in-between congregational singing of a chorale and the tradition of providing inter-line musical embellishment. Cantus Firmus chorales like that of the opening chorus of the Matthew Passion can be treated in the same way as the concerted chorales with evidence of lengthened last notes.

BWV105, as described by Marshall (see Literature Review – Fig 16) is also problematic due to its initial conception as a straight chorale to which Bach later added interludes. Although owing to re-barring, one cannot hold the fermata crotchets past a single crotchet with the changing harmonies in the instrumental parts, can the gap between the end of the first phrase and start of the second remain the same? For this to work, the original fermata minim would have to have been held for twice its notated length to equal the four beats of the revised barring. If one is to pursue the fermata as a hold, it seems more and more likely that if indeed a pause was intended,

its length varied according to which beat it fell on and also on whether there was an upbeat following. Of course, if Rifkin's experimenting with holding the instrumental parts at the fermatas bears any truth in historical performance, would Bach not have added fermata marks to the instrumental parts to make it clear? BWV12 and 172, like BWV105 are particularly troublesome because of the apparent likeness to a straight chorale if the instrumental parts were taken away. In the cases of BWV12 and 172, an obligato instrument makes holding at the end of lines very difficult indeed. Rifkin claims that he prefers the sound of holding (even though there are no fermata marks in the obligato part) but is unsure about which is more accurate.

The image shows a musical score for the final chorale of BWV 12, measures 5 through 9. It consists of five staves. The top staff is the vocal line with lyrics: "so wird Gott mich ganz väterlich in seinen Armen halten: drum lass ich ihn nur walten." The second staff is the obligato instrument, which has a tied Bb across beats two and three, followed by three more quavers. The third, fourth, and fifth staves are the instrumental parts. The score is in G major, 3/4 time, and features a quaver figuration over fermata notes in the vocal parts.

Figure 32 – BWV12 final chorale b.5 ff

The presence of the quaver figuration over fermata notes in the vocal parts is at first difficult to comprehend if the fermata means a hold. However, the second chorale line clearly shows the obligato part having a tied Bb across beats two and three followed by three more quavers. If the fermatas are held in the vocal parts *and* by the obligato

in the third and fourth lines then this tied figure could represent the written-out version without any fermata marks:



Figure 33 – BWV12 b.5ff hypothetically without fermata

The fact is, however, that chorales exist in many different forms and that varied treatment of the chorale line in such instances means that trying to justify the holding of fermatas in such situations may well be fruitless. BWV172 in a similar fashion includes an obbligato first violin part which contains no fermatas and has quaver motion which seems to count against holding. This chorale arrangement also makes similar use of tied figurations. BWV1's arrangement of the same chorale in comparison does not use any figuration which moves across the end of lines. BWV161 (1715) contains a setting of the passion chorale with obbligato flutes and like the earlier BWV12 and 172 uses figuration which traverses chorale lines, and in this instance no fermatas are present in the vocal lines either. Finally, returning to yet another harmonisation of *Wo soll ich fliehen hin*, BWV136 provides further confusion. The obbligato part does not cross over chorale lines apart from in one instance where, judging by the other harmonisations of the same chorale, there should be a fermata. However, in this instance the fermata is not present therefore not creating a problem. Can this situation be seen in the same light as the chorale from Saint John Passion? Bach adds a fermata over the word *Lieb* for effect which disrupts the normal flow of the line. Perhaps in BWV136 Bach removes the fermata to create a flow between lines, in much the same way that modern church choirs sometimes do

not breathe at the end of a line to make sense of a complete sentence split over two lines of text.

To conclude this section, the evidence of Bach's use of the fermata is certainly conflicting between the sub-genres of the chorale-based movements. The organ works and concerted chorales lend evidence to the tradition of holding last notes. However, if the straight chorales are taken separately, there is a good chance that comparing Bach's notational particularities with those of his contemporaries may lead us to being able to form a system for performing fermatas. Of course, all this assumes that chorales retained their sense of metre once a cadence had been reached. The organ works containing flourishes between lines certainly lose their sense of metre but as Marshall and others have warned, it would be dangerous to bracket different chorale genres together for the purpose of solidifying such evidence.

Chapter 3 – Examining Chorale Settings by Bach’s Contemporaries

Georg Philipp Telemann’s *Johannespassion* (TWV 5:30) of 1745 provides some interesting comparisons with Bach’s chorale notational practice. The opening choral *Ein Lämmlein geht und trägt die Schuld* is written in minims with a minim rest to start the movement. As discussed above, the minim rest is clearly present to enable the composer to begin with an upbeat so that the accent falls on the second syllable:



Figure 34 – TWV 5:30/1 b.1ff

Interestingly, Telemann does not include fermatas but the semibreve followed by minim rest is still present. Immediately, one must assume that Bach’s writing of the fermata in his own minim chorales was merely a visual signpost and that the semibreve and minim rest provided the actual performance directions. In movement number 16, Telemann sets *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan* and a comparison with Bach’s harmonisation reinforces the notion that a third beat fermata crotchet was held for a minim followed by a crotchet rest:



Figure 35 – TWV 5:30/16 b.1ff & Riemenschneider no.65

Movement number 36 (passion chorale) shows a similar picture:



Figure 36 – TWV 5:30/36 b.1ff + Riemenschneider no.21

Movement number 58, however, is problematic. For the first time in the passion, Telemann uses fermatas above final notes of cadences:



Figure 37 – TWV 5:30/58 b.1ff

What is interesting is that with the introduction of the fermata, there are no written out rests and perhaps more importantly, this particular chorale has three beats per bar. At this point, it can only be speculation as to the length of the hold, if indeed there was one. However, what feels very natural (from a 21st-century point of view) is to hold the fermata semibreve for 4 minims followed by a minim rest to allow the note of the next phrase to begin on the required upbeat. Another possibility could be to hold the fermata semibreve for 3 minims followed by two minim rests. Either way, the fermata note and associated rests would last 5 beats to allow the upbeat to fall on the 6th.

Unfortunately the following chorale (no.63) is in duple time and contains fermatas with a combination of notation very much like ‘O Traurigkeit’. Why did Telemann

feel that he needed to add fermatas especially later on in the movement when to all intents and purposes the rhythms were the same as earlier chorales? Take, for example, the penultimate phrase of this chorale:

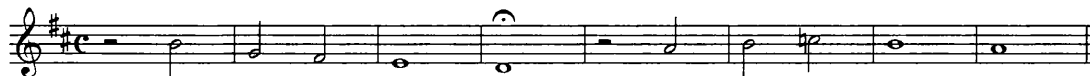


Figure 38 – TWV 5:30/63 b.38ff

Does the fermata add any further information to the performance especially if compared to a similar line in the opening movement of the passion? If fermatas were required in the opening lines then Telemann may have automatically added them to the other lines too. In a similar way, when Bach wrote out the version of 'O Traurigkeit' in minims, the first two phrases seemingly did not require a fermata but later phrases did, so to be consistent with the opening he added a symbol to the end of every phrase. Interestingly, the source labelled B by the Bärenreiter edition contains a version of the opening chorale with four minims per bar and still there is a semibreve followed by minim rest. I mention this fact because part of my thinking about the use of fermatas lies in the belief that composers obviously did not like using written out note values which would have had to have been tied over bar lines. This notational mess combined with a desire to be mathematically sound meant that with the move to crotchet beats, a symbol had to be used to abbreviate the longer notes.

While Telemann's Passion contains glimpses of parallels between Bach and his contemporaries, there are still inconsistencies which are troubling. Telemann's cantata *Siehe, ich komme, im Buch ist von mir geschrieben* TWV 1:1332 whilst not

containing a straight chorale offers evidence of holds in a concerted version of *Jesu, deine Passion*:



Figure 39 – TWV 1:1332/6 b.1ff

In triple time, this setting is very strict in terms of the gaps between chorale lines. It lends itself to my above inference that a triple time semibreve note was held for 4 beats plus rest. Here, the next phrase begins on a down beat which means that the fermata note can effectively be held for 4 or 5 beats with rests to make up two full bars. Again, such insight cannot be used as conclusive proof but at the same time such compositional processes cannot be entirely dismissed. Telemann's *Der jungste Tag wird bald sein Ziel erreichen* TVWV 1:302 (1710) contains a final chorale in crotchet notation and without fermatas:



Figure 40 – TVWV 1:302/8

This chorale turns out to be typical of many Telemann crotchet chorales. The characteristic crotchet rest to start the phrase and end of phrase minim followed by crotchet rest is no doubt comparable to the performance of a Bach chorale. Hypothetically, Bach may well have written out the above chorale as follows:



Figure 41 – hypothetical Bach notation of figure 40

If this is to be accepted as accurate, it is also true to say that for Telemann, like Bach, beats 1 & 3 and 2 & 4 were equivalent. Notice in figure 40 how the first phrase begins on beat two and the second phrase on beat four. For Bach and Telemann, the chosen notational methods ensure that the beats add up – Bach by notating a crotchet at the end of a phrase and Telemann by only ever using full bars as upbeats.

The final chorale of *Uns ist ein Kind geboren* TVWV 1:1451 may provide some compelling evidence about fermata notes other than crotchets:



Figure 42 – TVWV 1:1451/8

The first phrase ends on a minim (bar 3, beat 1) which moves directly onto the start of the next phrase on the third beat of the same bar. In comparison with a Bach harmonisation of the same tune, the minim at the end of the phrase is retained and given Bach's single crotchet upbeat, the next phrase begins on beat 1 of the next bar. Can it be assumed that the fermata minim in Bach's version is literally just a minim as in the Telemann? Perhaps Telemann's notation of this melody (which occurs in the same fashion in his other cantatas) cannot be compared to Bach's. Just as Bach added

a fermata to the opening phrase of the John Passion, in a similar way, Telemann may well have taken the decision to elide the first two phrases for musical reasons. However, translating Telemann's crotchet version into his minim notational style shows that it actually resembles the final chorale of his Saint John Passion which is notated in minims (see figure 36):

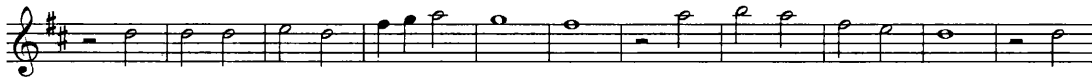


Figure 43 – Hypothetical minim version of figure 42

After looking at the chorales notated by Telemann and comparing them to Bach's own versions, there seems to be further confirmation of certain equivalences. From a Telemann angle, it is quite possible to equate the minim and crotchet notations. From a Bachian angle, it is also clear that Telemann's crotchet notation without fermatas mainly concurs with Bach's crotchet notation with fermatas. Through Telemann's use of full bars to start the chorale, it is easy to see the equivalent of the minim with crotchet rest and fermata crotchet. Unfortunately, it does not shed light on fermata minims (or fermata-less minims in TVWV 1:1451) with regard to whether they are held longer than their notated value or even turned into a crotchet plus crotchet rest.

Finally in this section, let us examine five chorales from the anonymous *Lukas Passion* BWV246 originally thought to be by Bach. 'Ich, ich und meine sünden' uses minim notation and fermatas but no rests:

CHORAL.

Soprano. Ich, ich und mei-ne Sün - den, die sich wie Körn-lein fin - den des Sün-des an dem

Alto. Ich, ich und mei-ne Sün - den, die sich wie Körn-lein fin - den des Sün-des an dem

Tenore. Ich, ich und mei-ne Sün - den, die sich wie Körn-lein fin - den des Sün-des an dem

Basso. Ich, ich und mei-ne Sün - den, die sich wie Körn-lein fin - den des Sün-des an dem

Continuo.

Figure 44 – BWV246 ‘Ich, Ich und meine Sunden’ with BWV244/16

From the above comparisons of Telemann and Bach, it can be assumed that the Luke Passion notation is equivalent to writing a semibreve followed by a minim rest:

Figure 45 – hypothetical Telemann notation of figure 44

Why does the composer or scribe begin the chorale with a minim upbeat and not use rests? This notation is unique because elsewhere in the passion, for example in *Dass du nicht ewig schande mögest tragen*, he reverts to the minim style favoured by Telemann:

CHORAL.

Soprano. Dass du nicht e-wig Schan-de mö-gest tra-gen, lässt er sich schimpflich

Alto. Dass du nicht e-wig Schan-de mö-gest tra-gen, lässt er sich schimpflich

Tenore. Dass du nicht e-wig Schan-de mö-gest tra-gen, lässt er sich schimpflich

Basso. Dass du nicht e-wig Schan-de mö-gest tra-gen, lässt er sich schimpflich

Continuo.

Soprano. in's Ge-sicht.e schla-gen; weil dich zum öf-tern eit-ler Ruhm er-freu-et, wird er ver-spei-et.

Alto. in's Ge-sicht.e schla-gen; weil dich zum öf-tern eit-ler Ruhm er-freu-et, wird er ver-spei-et.

Tenore. in's Ge-sicht.e schla-gen; weil dich zum öf-tern eit-ler Ruhm er-freu-et, wird er ver-spei-et.

Basso. in's Ge-sicht.e schla-gen; weil dich zum öf-tern eit-ler Ruhm er-freu-et, wird er ver-spei-et.

Continuo.

Figure 46 – BWV246 ‘Dass du nicht ewig Schande mögest tragen’

(See figure 12 for comparison)

Here, again, by comparing the two notations, it is easy to see possible interpretations of Bach’s own melody from the opening chorale of the Saint John Passion. An interesting notational case is that of *Was kann die Unschuld besser kleiden* in which the number of syllables plus necessary upbeat required the composer to finish the phrase on the last beat of the bar:

CHORAL.



Soprano. Was kann die Unschuld bes.ser klei.den, als des He.ro.des wei.sses Kleid,
ob auch die Ju.den wie die Hei.den ent.brennen vol.ler Hass und Neid.

Alto. Was kann die Unschuld bes.ser klei.den, als des He.ro.des wei.sses Kleid,
ob auch die Ju.den wie die Hei.den ent.brennen vol.ler Hass und Neid.

Tenore. Was kann die Unschuld bes.ser klei.den, als des He.ro.des wei.sses Kleid,
ob auch die Ju.den wie die Hei.den ent.brennen vol.ler Hass und Neid.

Basso. Was kann die Unschuld bes.ser klei.den, als des He.ro.des wei.sses Kleid,
ob auch die Ju.den wie die Hei.den ent.brennen vol.ler Hass und Neid.

Continuo.



Sie zeu.gen trotz der Spöt.te rei, dass Je.sus Christ un.schul.dig sei.

Sie zeu.gen trotz der Spöt.te rei, dass Je.sus Christ un.schul.dig sei.

Sie zeu.gen trotz der Spöt.te rei, dass Je.sus Christ un.schul.dig sei.

Sie zeu.gen trotz der Spöt.te rei, dass Je.sus Christ un.schul.dig sei.

Continuo.

Figure 47 – BWV246 ‘Was kann die Unschuld besser kleiden’

In this instance, the notation seems to suggest that the first phrase ends with a minim followed by a minim rest. Compared with other minim notation, this is highly irregular, but, then again so is the length of the phrase. Would the singers literally sing a minim, breath in the minim rest and then start singing the second phrase? Perhaps, to avoid the complication of two minims tied across bar lines, the final note of the phrase was actually performed as a semibreve but not notated as such. Bach’s own harmonisations of this melody are very revealing:

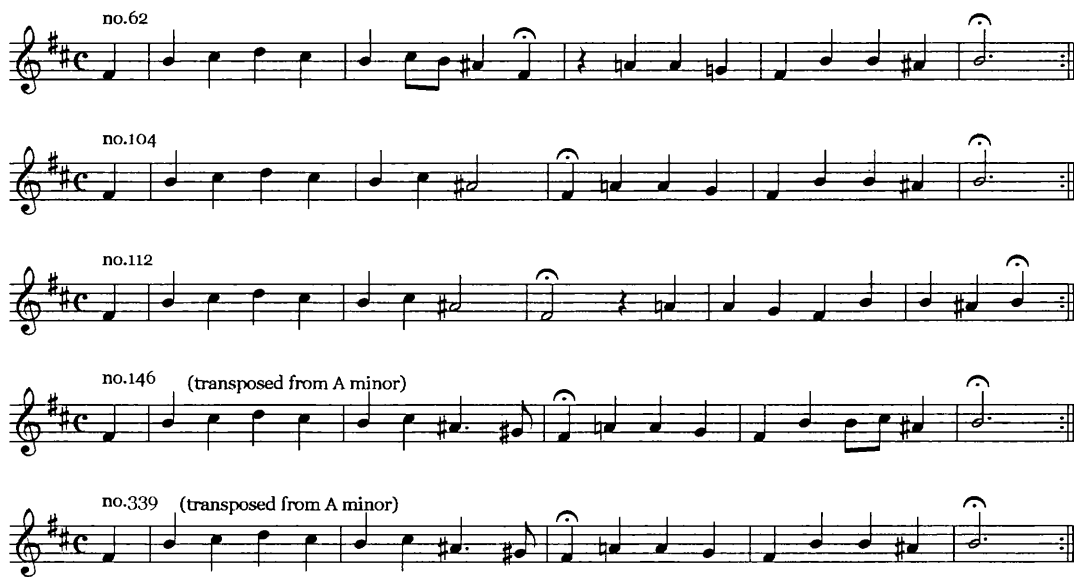


Figure 48 – Five Bach versions of BWV246 ‘Was kann die Unschuld besser kleiden’

In the first example from 1726, Bach starts with a single upbeat as expected and is forced to finish the phrase on the unusual position of beat 4. Perhaps the notated crotchet rest which follows can be seen as equivalent to the Luke Passion rest. The second phrase resembles Telemann with effectively a three crotchet upbeat, but this was borne out of necessity due to the first phrase completing a whole bar. The second notation of the melody (c. 1742) provides a different rhythm. Here, the penultimate note is doubled in length to allow the final note to fall on the first beat of the bar. While this in itself was no doubt desirable, the holding of the fermata note for two crotchets followed by a crotchet rest seems much more plausible. Version three from 1727 is different again and aside from the date can also be placed between version 1 and 2 in terms of notation. In this version, Bach retains the crotchet rest after the fermata but has doubled the penultimate note *and* the final note. This allows the second phrase to begin with a true upbeat. Several interesting points emerge. Firstly, as discussed previously, why did Bach write a fermata minim followed by a crotchet rest when he could have written just a fermata dotted minim. Secondly the transfer of

the start of the second phrase onto beat 4 means that Bach had to shorten the notated length of the final note of the second phrase to ensure that the beats added up. The fourth version is very similar to the second version although the extended penultimate note has been replaced by a dotted crotchet and quaver. The final version again relates most closely to the second version but is characterised by heavy use of suspensions in the underlying parts. Perhaps surprisingly, this final version is the earliest of the five dated 1723.

Lass mich Gnade für dir finden shows a similar situation:

(CHORAL.)

Soprano.
Lass mich Gnade für dir fin - den, der ich bin voll Trau - rig - keit, Mei - nen Glauben
hilf du mir selbst ü - ber - win - den, so oft ich muss in den Streit.

Alto.
Lass mich Gnade für dir fin - den, der ich bin voll Trau - rig - keit, Mei - nen Glauben
hilf du mir selbst ü - ber - win - den, so oft ich muss in den Streit.

Tenore.
Lass mich Gnade für dir fin - den, der ich bin voll Trau - rig - keit, Mei - nen Glauben
hilf du mir selbst ü - ber - win - den, so oft ich muss in den Streit.

Basso.
Lass mich Gnade für dir fin - den, der ich bin voll Trau - rig - keit, Mei - nen Glauben
hilf du mir selbst ü - ber - win - den, so oft ich muss in den Streit.

Continuo.

täglich mehr, deines Geistes Schwert verehr, damit ich den Feind kann schla - gen, alle Pfeile von mir ja - gen.

täglich mehr, deines Geistes Schwert verehr, damit ich den Feind kann schla - gen, alle Pfeile von mir ja - gen.

täglich mehr, deines Geistes Schwert verehr, damit ich den Feind kann schla - gen, alle Pfeile von mir ja - gen.

täglich mehr, deines Geistes Schwert verehr, damit ich den Feind kann schla - gen, alle Pfeile von mir ja - gen.

täglich mehr, deines Geistes Schwert verehr, damit ich den Feind kann schla - gen, alle Pfeile von mir ja - gen.



Figure 49 – BWV 246 ‘Lass mich Gnade für dir finden’ and nos. 254 & 76 from Riemenschneider

The Luke Passion version most closely relates to the second version (1738) which is the later of the two (the other being 1723). In the Luke Passion and 1738 version by Bach, the penultimate and final notes are again extended to minims. The Luke Passion chorale, written in crotchets but without fermatas, clearly gives the impression that the final note of the first phrase is held for four beats. Later phrases finish with minims in all versions but the Luke Passion, written without fermatas, therefore gives the indication that these notes should not be held longer than a minim. However, the length of phrases and the fact that they start on the downbeat means that the final note would have to be a minim. The question is whether the Luke Passion composer expected an unwritten hold to be performed at these points.

Finally, *Ei was hat er denn gethan*, again shows that in minim notation, chorale phrases that start with a downbeat are always preceded by a semibreve (with or without fermata):

(CHORAL.)

Soprano. Vers 1. Ei, was hat er denn ge than, was sind sei - ne Schul - den,

Alto. Vers 1. Ei, was hat er denn ge than, was sind sei - ne Schul - den,

Tenore. Vers 2. Nein, für - wahr, wahr - haf - tig nein! er ist oh - ne Sün - den;

Basso. Vers 2. Nein, für - wahr, wahr - haf - tig nein! er ist oh - ne Sün - den;

Continuo.

B. W. XLV. (2)

dasser da vor Je - der - mann sol - che Schmach muss dul - den? Hat er et - wa Gott be - trübt

dasser da vor Je - der - mann sol - che Schmach muss dul - den? Hat er et - wa Gott be - trübt

sondern was der Mensch für Pein bil - lig sollt' em - pfin - den, was für Krankheit, Angst und Weh

sondern was der Mensch für Pein bil - lig sollt' em - pfin - den, was für Krankheit, Angst und Weh

bei ge - sun - den Ta - gen, dass er ihm an - i - tzo giebt sei - nen Lohn mit Pla - gen?

bei ge - sun - den Ta - gen, dass er ihm an - i - tzo giebt sei - nen Lohn mit Pla - gen?

uns von Recht ge - büh - ret, das ist's, so ihn in die Höh' an das Kreuz ge - füh - ret.

uns von Recht ge - büh - ret, das ist's, so ihn in die Höh' an das Kreuz ge - füh - ret.



Figure 50 – BWV 246 ‘Ei was hat er denn gethan’ and no. 106 from Riemenschneider

With this wealth of notational practices available from different composers and differences within a single composer's output and indeed sometimes within a single work, the final section will attempt to draw conclusions as to Bach's performance practice surrounding the fermata.

Chapter 4 – Conclusions

Having researched Bach's use of fermata in chorale genres it seems very certain that the corona symbol, in straight chorales at least, was used as an abbreviation of a note value at the end of a phrase. That is to say that although I believe that the affected note was held for longer than its written value, on paper the note was made shorter first to facilitate the desired placement of strong and weak beats and secondly to allow the composition to add up in terms of any initial upbeat and final bar. Telemann's method of ensuring perfect addition was to always start with a full bar (even if the first bar contained only an upbeat).

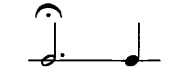


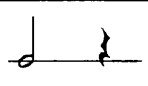

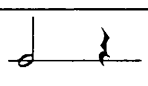



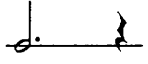
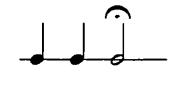





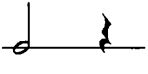
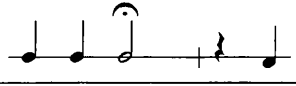

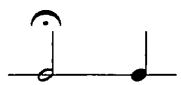

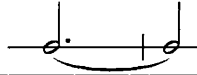
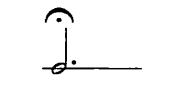

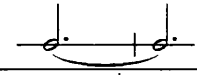


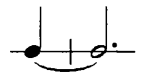
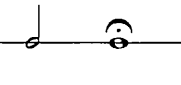

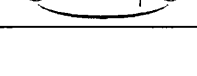
In terms of the actual symbol itself and its many meanings and uses, although the majority of the time it refers to a 'pause', this is not always the case. Franklin's work on tempo proportion and use of the symbol as a marker for change on the surface does not match with the notion of a 'pause'. Perhaps, the change in proportion went hand-in-hand with a slight pause in the performance. Whatever the situation, the corona symbol definitely called upon the player or singer to observe an event. In the majority of cases, this would have been listening to others in the ensemble for the true end of the phrase or movement (canon, point d'orgue, da capo etc). In this way, all the situations where fermatas are used could live happily under one very broad definition. If the true beginnings of the corona were on very last notes of sacred vocal pieces then perhaps the symbol has never lost its original meaning.

The evidence available in the organ works shares many similarities with those in the sacred vocal genres. There are certainly instances in both where the holding of the

fermata is impractical due to continually moving obbligato or inner parts but as I have shown, the vocal examples appear early in Bach's career and hence are probably not representative of his Leipzig practice. It is very possible that at this stage in his career, Bach was experimenting with different notational devices. What is also possible is that Bach had already developed his fermata-style notation of chorales and when he wrote two chorales for the 'Keiser' passion reverted to minim notation but out of habit continued in his use of fermatas. The organ works remain problematic in that they are not vocal works and as such should not be analysed in the same way. However, as was pointed out earlier, I see no problem with using the organ works as evidence for vocal practice (inter-line flourishes separating lines etc) as these organ works may have related to certain vocal practices that came to fruition. It also seems more likely that the fermata symbol became a purely visual signpost as it moved from vocal to organ. The notion that the chorale-based fermatas for Bach *never* meant a hold is unthinkable given the symbol's multiple associations as a pause outside of these works and Bach's own use in, for example, the opening chorale of the Saint John Passion. This, coupled with Walther's lexicon definition, the Schütz comment about lack of pauses in psalms compared with other genres and comparison of practices between Bach, Telemann and Keiser provide strong arguments for lengthening the note under the corona in vocal chorale genres.

Given these conclusions, and taking the assumption that the beat continues through the held note, I will attempt to lay out a possible scheme for interpreting Bach's fermata notes.

Table 2 – Possible Interpretations of Fermatas in Bach Chorales

Bach Notation	Example (Riemenschneider)	Alternative Notation by Another Composer (figure)	Interpretation of fermata note
	2	36	
	2	35	
	254	49	 
	22	49	 
	28	50	 
	112	48	
	97	48	
	137	42	
	1	37	 
	109	39	 
	90	-	 
	194	-	 

N.B. The last three rows are examples that contain three beats per bar

As the table makes clear, it is absolutely impossible, given the evidence, to pin down how long some of the more obscure placements of fermata notes should last. However, given the parallels between Telemann and Bach practice and that beats 1 & 3 and 2 & 4 were equivalent, this seems like a logical starting point for working out the other examples. There seems to have been a move in Bach's notational habits from minim to crotchet notation, however the grey areas include his (and Telemann's) use of fermatas when they appear superfluous in minim notation and Bach's use of fermata notes followed by a crotchet rest. In my interpretation of Bach's minim notation with fermata, it is obvious, as stated above, that Bach was already used to writing fermata marks at the ends of phrases and hence completed minim-notated chorales in the same way. Telemann, on the other hand, seems to use fermatas specifically when last notes of phrases are held longer than a full bar. If written out in full this would not look neat and therefore he chooses to abbreviate the note so that it fits within a bar. For both composers, the use of a rest following a fermata note seems to shorten the fermata note by one minim to allow the next phrase to begin with its upbeat. In Bach's crotchet notation, the use of fermata followed by rest may be superfluous but because the symbol is also a visual signpost for the end of the phrase its place is retained. What is puzzling, however, is that Bach uses both dotted minims and minim-plus-crotchet-rest in the same chorale and so this cannot be explained through Bach's development of his chorale notation. Can the two notations be equivalent in performance or does one require the addition of an extra crotchet rest? The subsequent transfer of the upbeat from weak to strong beat would seem to counter the previous conclusions about how the composers treated beats. It turns out that it is quite rare for Bach to use both systems in the same chorale and a closer inspection of other chorales that use fermata-minim-plus-rest reveals that it is most likely Bach's

original source that contains the rests. Take, for example, the chorale from *Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf* BWV226:



Figure 51 – no.69 from Riemenschneider (chorale tune in BWV226)

Bach's possible source of the tune *Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herre Gott*, Walther (1524) contains rests at the same point Bach's does:



Figure 52 - *Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herre Gott*, Walther (1524)

Es ist genug from cantata BWV60 is another example of a chorale where Bach uses both forms of notation:



Figure 53 – BWV 60 final chorale

An examination of the source of the tune (J.R. Ahle's collection of church compositions dated 1662) shows a corresponding rest:



Figure 54 – Es ist genug, JR Ahle (1662)

So perhaps the two notations can be seen as identical after all and the additional rests are present due to Bach’s faithfulness to the original chorale melody source.

Whilst composers had different ideas about how best to notate a chorale, (whether or not to use fermatas, elongation of certain notes particularly at cadence points, use of full bars for an upbeat etc) it is these differences which also enable us to see the similarities in performance practice, particularly in the case of Bach’s differing notation of the same chorale. Given all the compelling evidence, it is hard to argue against observing fermatas in Bach chorales.

Table 3 – Comparison of Eleven Recorded Performances of the First Chorale from Bach’s Saint John Passion BWV 245

Conductor	Action on ‘Lieb’ fermata	In General
Parrott (1990)	accented and short	Slight lift and rit. Into b.6 & b.9 fermatas. B.9 fermata performed as minim.
Koopman (1993)	slight lift	Consistent slight lift resulting in shorter notes than notated.
Suzuki (1998)	long pause performed as minim + crotchet rest	Variable in treatment – normally performed as slight lift but b.9 as crotchet + plus crotchet rest.
Higginbottom (2002)	slight lift	Slight lift resulting a shorter notes than written – equivalent to quaver + quaver rest. Last fermata is preceded by rit.
Gardiner (1986)	slight lift	b.9 fermata is preceded by rit. and is performed slightly longer than a crotchet.
Herreweghe (2001)	held for minim + crotchet	Slight rit onto b.6 fermata. Consistently performed as minim + crotchet rest.
Cleobury (1996)	slight lift	Slight rit into most cadences and always performed as just lifts resulting in shorter notes than written.
Scholar’s Baroque Ensemble (1993)	slight lift	More leisurely approach. Although fermatas are still performed as crotchets, there is less hurry to get to the next note.
Rilling (1996)	long pause but performed as a dotted minim which carries over to the next phrase	The other fermatas are performed as a crotchet or shorter followed by a slight lift.
Kuijken (1987)	a lift which is performed (approximately) as crotchet + quaver rest	A much more leisurely approach. Although fermatas are still performed as crotchets, there is less hurry to get to the next note.
Veldhoven (2004)	long pause performed as minim + crotchet rest	Combines simultaneously both the leisurely approach and use of minim + crotchet rest. The rest becomes slightly elongated to create very relaxed phrase openings and closings.

Chorale Index Guide

This guide has been written primarily as a tool for my masters thesis on the subject of fermatas in Bach chorales, but for a long time I have been frustrated by not being able to find the harmonised chorale to “check what the composer did” for A-level Bach chorale exam papers. So here is the chorale index for all lovers of Bach’s chorale output and also for all those teachers of techniques of composition who do not enjoy thumbing through all of *371* to find Bach’s answer to the exam question.



0 = same note

1 = higher note

2 = lower note

Method of deriving the code

The reader should start with the second note of an unknown chorale tune and work out whether it is the same, higher or lower than the previous note. In this instance, the second note is another G so we use 0. The next note is higher (1) and the next is lower (2) and so on. The index generally lists the opening phrase of the chorale (up to the

first fermata) although occasionally due to a very short opening phrase, up to the second fermata. In this instance, we would look up the number 012220112.

The index is listed in numerical order and finding the chorale should not be too difficult. In the event of a chorale having the same up and down motion in the first phrase, several chorales may have to be consulted before the correct chorale is found.

I have deliberately chosen this system as it is independent of key. As the reader is surely aware, Bach and other composers harmonised the Lutheran melody in different keys based on the surrounding movements. This index is therefore also useful for finding multiple harmonisations of the same chorale tune. As an example, looking up the number 122221 gives the reader all the harmonisations of the 'passion' chorale.

Riemenschneider Bach Chorale Index

00000111	127
00011	167
00011222	248
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	290
	354
00012	202
000120202	124
00012112	160
0001222	341
	4
	129
	2
	272
0002201	203
000222	307
	163
	198
	113
	81
0010102	207
001012	165
00101222	12
00102	32
001021211201	208
0010221221122	330
0011112	143
00111222	17
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001122111	148
0011222122	181
001202	151
0012111	188
	196
0012112	51

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0012112222	70
0012122	370
00121222	45
001221222	53
	178
002111	246
00211122	215
	259
	91
002111222	308
	273
	217
	156
	20
	250
0021202	189
0021222	100
	19
	126
0022111	284
00221110122	59
	105
0022111012212	111
002221110122	78
002221112021	229
00222122202	194
010101	152
	348
0101010	39
01010112	299
010111	212
01011221112	238
0102122	128
0102212200211122	150
0102220	155

01022211222	77
01022212222	118
0110122	137
01110	239
011102	135
0111022	214
01111	25
	281
011110021	102
01111002212	304
	331
01111021	343
	9
	361
0111112	18
011112111	176
01112	190
0111211	88
	23
	99
011121211	123
0111222	114
011122212	337
0112101121	222
011210222	94
01121111222	210
0112112202	68
011211222	247
01121222	300
	145
01122101	260
	362
01122111	306
	177
	201
01122200	264
0112221	79
01122210211	109
011222121	226
0112222	101
	303

012021	346
012111021	357
	139
0121221222	43
0122111	230
012220112	1
0122212	315
0122221222111122	90
02111112212	258
021111202	301
	336
02111121122	31
021112	11
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	92
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02111220	252
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021121122	141
02112202	369
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	269
	37
0211222	267
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	47
	183
02112222	110
021221122	236
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0212212	28
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0221111202	285
0221112	93
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0222111	116
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02221112	27
0222112202	242
02221221	162
022212221	314
02222	324
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0222200	8
10001222	54
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101012	140
10111	147
101110	24
101110122021	108
1011122	34
101122122222	251
10212110022	30
1021222	49
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10222111	157
102222111	97
10222211112	84
1100012	179
1100110	48
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1101220	172
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1102211	224
1102220	233
	121
	365
	350

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1110101222	186
111012012	216
1110211211211	234
11110111	26
	274
11110222	310
	44
1111101210	220
1111112210	347
1111120	161
1111122	293
11111221	182
111121220	66
	119
111122	191
111122122	168
1111222	332
	65
	364
11112221	249
	353
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	125
	313
11112221122	232
11112222	35
	243
11120102202	205
11121021	120
	115
	349
111211	82
11122	159
1112202112	231
11122122	204
	112
	104
111221222	339
	62
	146

1112222	60
1121021	265
	41
112102202	132
1121110	340
112121212122	209
112122221	171
112201122	360
11220122	321
1122111	136
11221222	55
1122211112	36
1122211122	72
1122222	254
	76
	282
	256
	298
	29
	67
	64
1200012202	130
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120001222	320
1211102220	228
121112	316
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1211120	244
12111222	122
121212	133
1212202	180
1212220	153
1220222	221
12210222	262
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1221102	278
122111	166
1221111222	16
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12211122	245
122122021	206
122211	199
	302
1222111122	195
	305
	86
1222112	69
1222112212	309
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122221	270
	74
	286
	367
	21
	89
	345
	98
	80
122221102	323
20112222	174
2101011121	227
210111	169
2101222	134
21020202	87
2110101	240
2110211	144
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2110222	223
21110	200
211102	175
21111112202	33
211111122021	241
2111112	351
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21111122	52
2111112221	13
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211112	197
2111122	287
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	289
	275
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	355
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	117
	363
21111222	371
	184
	15
	261
2111122222	219
2111202	42
211121	142
21112202	225
2111222211222	271
211222	311
21122210	192
21122211	10
2122111122	173
220011222	211
22101	255
	312
22101010	280
2211102	338
	154
221111	106
	83
	61
22111122	366
	22
2211221	131
	328
221122211101	71
2212111	46
	344
22122102	57
221222112	149

2220111	279
	40
222101	291
	85
222111122	368
222112	319
	235
22211222110	193
22212222	237
22222102	277
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