

### **“The royal Catholic chapel in Leipzig’s Pleissenburg castle”**

The establishment in Leipzig’s Pleißenburg fortress of a royal Catholic chapel is revealed in a number of primary and secondary sources. Founded by August II in 1710, the *Schlosskapelle* came to be staffed by two Jesuits from the Province of Bohemia. Those who worshipped there included Catholic members of Saxony’s ruling family, Italian merchants, Catholic visitors to the Leipzig fairs, and a small population of Leipzig Catholics. In 1719 the first of a series of five young musicians from Bohemia arrived to serve as organists for an instrument that was completed in 1720. These musicians also served as sacristans and teachers in the Jesuit primary school of Leipzig, and three would later become integrated into musical networks of the Dresden court.

This Catholic presence in the Lutheran-centred historiography of Johann Sebastian Bach was not without controversy. The first Catholic service was held on Pentecost Sunday 1710, the anniversary of Martin Luther’s first public Protestant service in Leipzig given 171 years earlier. In April 1723, shortly before the arrival of Bach and his family, disturbances occurred when a sermon preached by Fr Czermak SJ caused university students to attack both the chapel and the Jesuit house, leading the preacher be recalled to Dresden. Events such as these might explain the neglect of this small but significant Catholic presence in Leipzig during the first half of the eighteenth century.

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