



by Kimberly Davis

Bach to His Roots

A Journey to J.S. Bach's Germany



When most people think of vacations through Europe, they think of the big cities: London, Paris, Rome. Classical music lovers sometimes have a bit more sophisticated taste, which might lead them to some smaller but well-known cultural cities such as Salzburg, Prague and Leipzig. But for the traveler

looking to stray away from the clatter of city life, for the cultured observer and history buff looking for a more authentic experience, there are dozens of special hidden nuggets in Europe. For the Bach lover, Germany is your mecca. I recently traveled to Eisenach and Erfurt, where I began my quest to trace the footsteps of Johann Sebastian Bach.

It's amazing how you can know so much about a composer and then be completely humbled when you get on their home turf. I started at the very beginning in Erfurt, a small city of only 200,000 people. In the 16th century it only had 20,000 inhabitants, including the Hungarian immigrant Veit Bach. Here is where the Bach legacy began.

Veit was a sugar baker. His son, Hans, became the very first professional musician in both the family and the town. For generations after, the Bach family made a name for themselves as established musicians otherwise known as town pipers. Bach's parents were eventually born, baptized and married in Merchant's

Church. Their portraits can be seen today in Anger Museum. They later moved to Eisenach, a town just a 20-minute train ride away.

In addition to the Bach family history, Erfurt has a rich culture. Martin Luther lived here and there are more than 20 churches within the small radius of the city. In the center of this small and charming city is St. Mary Domberg Cathedral/Church of St. Severus. Each year, this magnificent 900-year-old cathedral hosts the annual Cathedral Steps Festival, where the Erfurt Theater stages a chosen performance on the grand steps between the cathedral and church.

My journey led me to Eisenach, the town where J.S. Bach was born on March 21, 1685. Each year, the city holds a Bach festival from March to April in his honor. You can visit many historical sites related to the composer, including the Church of St. George, where he was baptized, the Latin school in the old Dominican Monastery, where he was schooled, and the Old Cemetery, where many members of his family are buried. But perhaps the most fascinating Bach feature is the Bachhaus (Bach House). The home is over 600 years old and was established as a museum in 1906. The Bachhaus was the first worldwide museum to be dedicated to J.S. Bach. It is presumed to be the birthplace of the composer. Its collection includes archives, household items, and other treasures including authentic family musical instruments. Each day, the staff holds a specialized concert on these instruments so that you can hear the music just as Bach did. Additionally, there are English tours.

Other great musical composers lived and worked in Eisenach as well, including Martin Luther, Goethe, Wagner, Liszt, and the poet Fritz Reuter.

Bach lived in Eisenach until the age of 10, when both his parents died within the span of one year. His eldest brother, Johann Christoph, took him in and they moved to Ohrdruf.

In 1716, J.S. Bach returned to Erfurt to check the organ in the Augustiner Church. He returned again around 1728, but the reason is not known.

You can learn more about these great cities and features by checking out the following websites: www.erfurt-tourist-info.de, www.eisenach-tourist.de and www.bachhaus.de ♪

THE FINEST QUALITY GUITAR AND BASS HARDWARE YOU CAN BUY!

UPGRADE TO HIPSHOT

hipshot
Made in USA

800-262-5630 telephone • 607-532-9404 telephone • 607-532-9530 Fax
www.hipshotproducts.com • hipshot@hipshotproducts.com

Mastering makes it better,
and our new room makes it great.

Sonic Solutions HD Workstation & Maselec Custom Analog Console
M/S Processing, Elliptical Filtering, Stereo Field Width Enhancement

The right tools & experience to deliver a fat, warm, loud, industry-standard PMCD

IKI
Recording Studios
Glen Cove, Long Island
516-671-4300