



CHURCH GUIDE

ST. THOMAS CHURCH IN LEIPZIG



ST. THOMAS CHURCH IN LEIPZIG

A PLACE OF FAITH,
SPIRIT AND MUSIC

Edited by Britta Taddiken
Translated by Björn Mackenthun



EVANGELISCHE VERLAGSANSTALT
Leipzig

Bibliographic information published by the German National Library
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbiographie;
detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>

© 2017 by Evangelische Verlagsanstalt GmbH · Leipzig

This work, including all of its parts, is protected by copyright. Any use beyond the strict limits
of copyright law without the permission of the publishing house is strictly prohibited and
punishable by law.

Layout and Typesetting: Makena plangrafik GbR, Leipzig

ISBN 978-3-374-04796-3
www.eva-leipzig.de

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Christian Wolff BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION HISTORY	5
Martin Petzoldt † WORKS OF ART	15
Martin Petzoldt † PERSONALITIES LINKED TO ST. THOMAS CHURCH	31
Ullrich Böhme ORGANS AND INSTRUMENTS IN ST. THOMAS CHURCH	41
Georg Christoph Biller THE ST. THOMAS CHOIR AND THE THOMASKANTORS	47
Christian Wolff ST. THOMAS CHURCH TODAY	57
DATES AND EVENTS	62



1 Hall nave towards the east with the Baroque pulpit by Valentin Schwarzenberger, the Prince's Chair on the north gallery (left) and the Born Altar in the choir. Water-colour by Hubert Kratz, c. 1880.

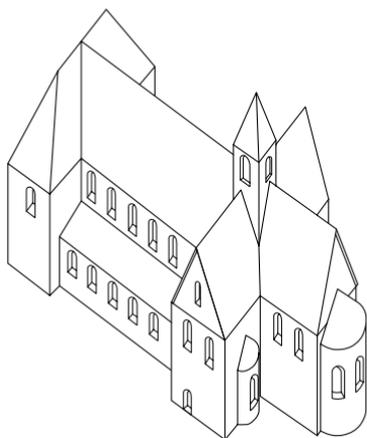
BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION HISTORY

Viewed from the outside, a steep pitched roof rises above the impressive late-Gothic hall structure of St. Thomas church. The attached, extended choir on the east end of the building recalls the fact that St. Thomas church was once the collegiate church of the Augustine canons: Neo-Gothic sacristy structures, the tower on the south side, which stands at the seam between the nave and the choir, and the neo-Gothic western façade all point to the turbulent architectural history of St. Thomas Church.

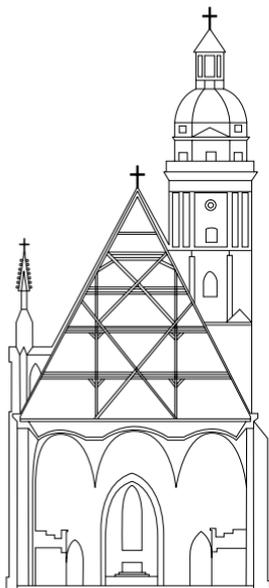
In 1949, the remains of the great cantor, Johann Sebastian Bach, were removed from St. John's church, which was destroyed in the Second World War. In 1950, they were reburied in the choir, where the oldest architectural components of this church's over 800-year history have been identified.

PREHISTORY OF THE MODERN ST. THOMAS CHURCH

It is assumed that a three-nave late-Gothic church without a transept and with a massive western tower stood on the site of today's St. Thomas Church in the middle of the 12th century. As recorded in a papal document from 1218, in 1212 Margrave Dietrich von Meissen ordered the founding of a collegiate church of the Augustine canons, whose patron was the Apostle Paul. During their conflicts with the margrave in this period, the citizenry of Leipzig are said to have scattered the building material for the new choir throughout the area. A capital in the shape of a chalice, discovered during a structural examination, is evidence of a late-Romanesque choir. In the mid-13th century, a massive tower was built over the east end of the southern aisle. The church's nave was



2 Reconstruction of the Romanesque structure from the 12th/13th century.



3 Cross section of the modern St. Thomas Church.

then elevated. The altar consecrations recorded for the 14th century suggest that the structural changes in the nave were completed at this time. It is conceivable that a medieval sacristy stood in conjunction with the eastern wing of the monastery, north of the choir.

THE ST. THOMAS HALL CHURCH

In the years 1482–1496, in the centre of the flourishing commercial and trade fair town of Leipzig, a spacious hall church was built as an outstanding example of upper Saxon late-Gothic style. The well-proportioned interior with its outstanding acoustics has been preserved to this day. With a breadth of 25 metres, an average length of 39 metres and 14 metres high sandstone columns, this hall greatly surpassed its predecessor. The south side, with its churchyard, was intended for show and is furnished with Weissenfels sandstone ashlar blocks. The inside is distinguished by an impressive reticulated vault, whose ribs are made of Rochlitz porphyry tuff. The keystones are made of brick. The late-Gothic vault masons used advanced technology to balance the church's various nave widths with the various speed sequences of the rib figures. The colourful rib system, contrasting with the whitewashed stucco, vividly expresses the hall church's dynamic tension. The construction of the new St. Thomas Church was directed by Master Klaus Roder until 1489 and afterwards by Master Konrad Pflüger until its completion in 1496. St. Thomas Church was consecrated by the Bishop