

# **STORIES OF GREAT MUSICIANS**

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Stories of Great Musicians by Annie C. Thayer

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**ANNIE C. THAYER**

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MUSICIANS**



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*BIOGRAPHICAL SERIES*

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OF  
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BY  
ANNIE C. THAYER

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J. HANSEN.

FANLUDES OF RACE.



## JOHN SEBASTIAN BACH.

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Over three hundred years ago, there lived in a little German town, a good man named Hans Bach. He had a son who was a miller. This miller was so fond of music that while his great mill-wheel turned round and round, grinding the corn, he would take his zither and play and sing in the dusty old mill.

The miller's son also loved music so that he studied and became a better musician than his father. He was full of fun and kindness, and he traveled about the country making music until he was known and loved by every one. He had three sons who made music their profession, and these sons married and settled at home, or in neighboring towns; and by and by *their* sons grew up and made homes of their own near by. So time went on, until there had grown to be many families of Bachs,

not far apart, fathers and sons, brothers and sisters, or uncles, cousins and grandchildren to each other.

In the south central part of Germany lies a beautiful stretch of country containing a cluster of little towns. There is Erfurt, situated in a fertile plain on the river Gera; Erfurt is a fortress, and is surrounded by high walls containing six great gates, and two citadels. Twelve miles south of Erfurt is Arnstadt, a very old city, situated in the picturesque country on the banks of the same river Gera; and a few miles west of Erfurt, in the midst of wooded hills, beside another small river, is Eisenach.

It was principally in these three towns that the Bach families lived, and they so loved their homes and each other, that they never moved far away. There was one other thing they passionately loved and that was music.

Once a year they held a great family reunion. After the greetings were over, all joined in a solemn choral or hymn, followed by livelier songs. Then they talked of what had happened since they last met. If one had composed a new song, now was the time to sing it to the

others. They praised and helped each other and had a joyful time.

The Bachs were so simple, earnest, high-minded, kind and cheerful that the townspeople loved them for their goodness, besides admiring them for their music. In Erfurt, for years to come, the town musicians were called "The Bachs" even after there was no one left by that name.

At last, more than one hundred years after the first Hans Bach, a little boy was born into one of these families, who was to become the greatest of all the Bachs. More than that, he became one of the greatest musicians of the world. He was born at Eisenach, March 21, 1685, the very year in which George Frederick Handel was born. He was named John Sebastian Bach.

What a difference there was between these two little children, who were born within a month of each other, not one hundred miles apart, and who became the two greatest musicians the world had known up to that time. No one can tell where little Handel's music came from, but we do know that it was almost unknown in his