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# Connections in the Loeb Music Library

David Schulenberg

WHEN I WAS ASKED TO CONTRIBUTE to the present collection of essays, my first thought—after feeling honored by the request—was that I've never made a "eureka" sort of discovery, at Harvard or elsewhere, unless one counts the page from a Yale Bach manuscript, reported in the literature as lost, whose image turned up on a microfilm reel in the Isham Library. Generally, my research has involved comparative music analysis and criticism of various types, which I imagine from a librarian's point of view has made me a real nuisance as I remove dozens of books and scores from the shelves in order to look up a small point or to check a note somewhere.

But it is for precisely that sort of research that the Loeb Music Library, and the Harvard College Library in general, is so well suited. The miles of open stacks make it possible for scholars to make connections between sources, and between different *types* of sources, that would be much harder to make in smaller or in closed-stack collections. For instance, using the Loeb Library as my base, I've recently completed a study of symbolic meaning and expression in the keyboard music of Froberger, a seventeenth-century German composer who was active in Austria, Italy, Belgium, and France. Pursuing various leads, I found myself in the basement of Pusey, looking up the correspondence of Huygens and Descartes on music; in Widener, to find out who was the Marquis de Termes for whom Froberger wrote a piece during the Fronde; and in the Art Library to find a picture of an *hôtel* in Paris in which Froberger just might have stayed after he was fired by the emperor. But always I return to the Loeb Library for the heart of my research, that is the music, which in this case included not only the three critical editions of Froberger's music that are on its shelves, but also the microfilm of another Yale manuscript (this time never reported as lost), which happens to contain variations that might be by Froberger, on a tune better known today as the theme from Smetana's *Moldau* (aka the Israeli national anthem *Hatikva*).

Another sort of "connection" project made possible for me by the Library involved reconstructing views of Johann Sebastian Bach and his great contemporary Handel, as seen through the eyes of Bach's son Carl Philipp Emanuel. The latter was himself a major eighteenth-century composer, and Harvard is now an informal partner with the Packard Humanities Institute in a project to publish C. P. E. Bach's works; one result has been a generous expansion of C. P. E. Bach materials in the Isham Library. But fifteen years ago the Loeb Library already had an impressive amount of related material, and I was able, among other things, to look at two items that C. P. E. Bach himself had no doubt seen. As valuable as they were to a scholar, I'm afraid they would

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not have seemed such to C. P. E. Bach. One was a mid-eighteenth-century edition containing what was claimed to be a keyboard fugue by Handel, but which was actually a movement from a flute sonata. Seeing it first-hand one could understand why C. P. E. Bach found little to admire in Handel's keyboard music, as compared with that of his father. Even more laughable in C. P. E. Bach's eyes would have been the original edition of a report by Charles Burney, the English music historian, on the monster concert in which several thousand amateur musicians performed *Messiah* on what was thought to be the centenary of Handel's birth. They got the date wrong—he was born in 1685, not 1684—but, worse, the pamphlet was illustrated by a beautifully executed but sanctimonious plate showing “Britannia” and “a Genius offering the First-Fruits of a Sacrifice to his [Handel's] Memory” before a monument in the form of a pyramid. C. P. E. Bach would complain about such literal hero worship in his letters, of which, needless to say, the Loeb Library appears to have every available edition.

Today the Music Library is even richer in C. P. E. Bach sources, and I was recently able to examine in the PHI collection, on deposit in Isham, an early edition of one of the composer's most important publications, a set of keyboard pieces known as the *Probestücke*. Two more copies are in Houghton, one of them showing a distinct state of the print (from engraved plates), so I could almost have completed my edition of the pieces without leaving Harvard. The same collection, incidentally, includes early editions of C. P. E. Bach's *Essay on the True Manner of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, which the *Probestücke* were meant to illustrate.

Looking back on more than thirty years of using this library, I find that from a personal point of view perhaps my most memorable research projects undertaken there were my first. As an undergraduate at Harvard, I took Richard M. Hunt's course “Moral Dilemmas in a Repressive Society.” My term paper in this course concerned the hard decisions faced by musicians and musicologists as the Nazis gradually tightened their grip on German cultural institutions. Among the latter were music journals and newsletters—and here Harvard's remarkable collection came in handy, for it included many rare issues of German periodicals from the war years. Many of these now are probably available in facsimile or online, but I learned a great deal from handling the real things. Through these I was able to trace the gradual deterioration of respected journals into propaganda magazines, and even these grew sadly thin (and on worse and worse paper) as the war progressed. This was not a pretty picture, but it vividly demonstrated one way in which musicology might connect with the real world.

Equally important to me personally, in view of my eventual career as a performer of early music, was a paper I wrote for Lowell Lindgren (now at MIT) on twentieth-century approaches to the harpsichord in the performance of Baroque music. A bound set of Boston Symphony Orchestra concert programs going back to the early twentieth century made it possible for me to trace changing attitudes toward the performance of early music—from Mahler's use of a “piano-harpsichord” and an entire program



of spurious “baroque” works by the twentieth-century violinist Henri Casadesus to something more closely resembling historical performance practice under Munch and more recent conductors. Naturally Harvard’s record collection was a great help in this as well—and I was also able to draw on my experience playing the Chickering harpsichord of ca. 1910, once used by the pioneering American harpsichordist Ralph Kirkpatrick, which at the time was kept in the Spalding Room in the library. This particular project led me to realize that the reconstruction of historical European performance practice, a movement that centered in Boston during the late twentieth century, must have been substantially facilitated by the superb staff, accessibility, and collections of the Loeb Library. Subsequently I have made my own small contributions to performance-practice research, using among other things the nearly complete collection in Isham of microfilm copies of Elizabethan keyboard manuscripts. Nowhere else in the world could one have so readily surveyed the keyboard fingerings and ornament signs in all of the sources for the music of William Byrd and his contemporaries.

As a student, I never dreamt that thirty years later I would still be returning on an almost weekly basis to the Library, sometimes to open volumes such as the run of the early nineteenth-century *Allegemeine musikalische Zeitung* that I must have passed hundreds of times on my way up the stairs, wondering what it was for. But the connections that I made then, and which I continue to make, in the Loeb Music Library are ones that I could not have made anywhere else.



**H e i l i g,**  
mit  
**zwey Chören und einer Arieffe**  
zur Einleitung,

von  
**Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach.**



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Hamburg,  
im Verlage des Autors.  
Aus der Breitkopfischen Buchdruckerey zu Leipzig  
1779.

The first edition of C.P.E. Bach's *Heilig* [Hamburg: im Verlage des Autors; Leipzig: aus der Breitkopfischen Buchdruckerey, 1779]. Loeb Music Library, Merritt Room Mus 627.2.578 PF.

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