Tracking the sources for Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's Complete Works

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Accessibility
Tracking the Sources for
Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach’s
Complete Works

Paul Corneilson

ONE OF THE GREAT PLEASURES AND PRIVILEGES of being managing editor of *Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach: The Complete Works* (CPEB·CW) has been the opportunity to use the Loeb Music Library and to work with Sarah Adams, Keeper of the Isham Memorial Library, and Douglas Freundlich, Associate Keeper. From 2000, Loeb has been the designated depository for the source material for the critical edition. Fortunately, we did not have to start completely from scratch: Harvard already held a number of original C. P. E. Bach prints and manuscripts.15 There is also a microfiche edition of the vast holdings of Bach family manuscripts in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, titled *Musikhandschriften der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Part I: Die Bach-Sammlung* (Isham Lib. 4203.76.11 (1–1347)),16 and supplements, including *The Bach Collection in the Archive of the Sing-Akademie zu Berlin* (Isham Lib. 4203.76.14 (1–294)).17 Since 1985 Loeb Music Library has housed the United States RISM office, which holds microfilms of some of the Bach sources in this country. Nevertheless, Sarah has ordered copies of several hundred other sources of C. P. E. Bach’s music, and thus far, Doug has created almost 800 new Hollis catalogue records (including most of the items under Isham Lib. 3186.274.114.1–196).

To put this in perspective, the database for the C. P. E. Bach project has 1,498 work records, as of December 31, 2007. This includes all the authentic works of the composer


as documented in two thematic catalogues, plus most of the doubtful and spurious works that have been attributed to him over the years. Our database documents 2,254 manuscript sources and 274 early prints through the early nineteenth century. These numbers are slightly misleading, because some composite manuscripts contain dozens of works (short keyboard pieces or solo sonatas). There are 7,111 source-contents records, with some works surviving in twenty or more sources, while only a few works (mainly large-scale cantatas written for Hamburg) have only one unique source. It has been a logistical nightmare to track down and keep track of the sources and their contents.

For instance, Loeb now has more than a dozen early manuscript copies of Bach's double-choir Heilig, Wq 217, including his autograph score on microfilm and microfiche. A digital scan of the first printed edition (Merritt Room Mus 627.2.578) is available through a link in the HOLLIS record and at http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:FHCL. The Packard Humanities Institute Music Collection at Harvard also has a late-eighteenth-century manuscript copy of the work (Merritt Room Mus 627.2.579 PHI). While most of the manuscripts preserve accurate transcriptions of the work based on the print, a number of them represent performing material ranging from 20 to 48 separate parts. This attests to the popularity of one of Bach's greatest vocal works, and also serves as a record of its dissemination and transmission in the last years of the composer's life and after his death in 1788.

Loeb also has two dozen early prints of C. P. E. Bach's music and various editions of his influential keyboard treatise, Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu Spielen, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1753–1762; 2nd ed., Leipzig, 1789). David A. Wood's catalogue lists a number of these prints acquired before 1980. Since then Harvard has added to its C. P. E. Bach holdings, including the following list offered as a supplement to Wood's catalogue:

**Herrn Professor Gellert's Geistliche Oden und Lieder, mit Melodien von Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. 3rd ed. [Wq 194]**

19 This is all complicated by duplicative work numbers in the two catalogues, one case of which is discussed briefly in my report on CPEB:CW in Eighteenth-Century Music 2/1 (2005): 374–76.

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Berlin: G. L. Winter, 1764.

*Bound with:* Zwölf geistliche Oden und Lieder als ein Anhang zu Gellerts Geistlichen Oden und Liedern, mit Melodien von Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. [Wq 195]

Berlin, G. L. Winter, 1764.

Sechs Clavier-Sonaten für Kenner und Liebhaber. Erste Sammlung. [Wq 55]

Leipzig: Im Verlage des Autors, 1779. (2 copies)

Clavierstücke verschiedener Art. Erste Sammlung. [Wq 112]

Berlin, G. L. Winter, 1765.

Heilig mit zwey Chören und einer Ariette zur Einleitung. [Wq 217]


VI. Sonates pour le Clavecin avec des reprises variées. Dediées a Son Altesse Royale Madame La Princesse Amelie Princesse de Prusse. [Wq 50]

Berlin: G. L. Winter, 1760.

*Bound with:* Suite de VI. Sonates pour le Clavecin. [Wq 51]

Berlin, G. L. Winter, 1761; and

Zweye Fortsetzung von Sechs Sonaten fürs Clavier. [Wq 52]

Berlin: G. L. Winter, 1763.

More than 80% of the total number of sources for C. P. E. Bach’s music are located in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin and Brussels (a library that has a name in two languages: Conservatoire Royal de Musique, Bibliothèque / Koninklijk Conservatorium, Bibliothek), but the rest are scattered throughout Europe and the United States. There are autographs, for instance, in the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna (from the Brahms collection) and in the Austrian National Library (probably descending from Baron von Swieten’s estate), while the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the British Library, and Library of Congress each have a respectable number of manuscripts and prints. We have ordered and received copies of manuscripts from other libraries in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States. A few libraries, including the Boston Public Library and the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, refuse to sell copies of unique manuscripts to


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other institutions. We are still waiting and hoping to receive some material from St. Petersburg and Budapest.

The response time varies from library to library, and some have been amazingly efficient, filling orders in a matter of weeks. Others take years, as Sarah patiently sends reminders every six months or so. Relatively few libraries have delivered digital scans, though we did receive one from a library after they mailed the incorrect manuscript on microfilm, not once but twice. When Sarah pointed out the problem to a supervising librarian in September 2004, she received the following reply (one of my favorite emails): “De retour aujourd’hui, je reste STUPEFAITE à la lecture de votre message de vendredi: jouer à ce point de malchance depuis vos premiers contacts avec la Bibliothèque en janvier 2001 (!) tient de la malédiction. Je vous prie, si cela est encore possible, d’accepter nos infinies excuses.” As it turned out, this particular composite manuscript preserving 48 of Bach’s solo keyboard works includes an early version of one of his Suites (published in CPEB.CW, series I, volume 8.2, edited by Peter Wollny). All’s well that ends well.
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