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An analysis of the keyboard works of  
three sons of Bach: Wilhelm  
Friedemann Bach, Carl Philipp Emanuel  
Bach, Johann Christian Bach

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE KEYBOARD WORKS OF THREE

SONS OF BACH: Wilhelm Friedemann Bach  
Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach  
Johann Christian Bach

by

Margaret A. Moreland

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## Preface

We are confronted here with composers of a great transition period; a period in music when the forces of polyphony gradually gave way to the homophonic idiom with its clear-cut harmonic basis; this leading eventually to the Viennese-Classical-School of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

The sons of Bach, Wilhelm Friedemann, Carl Philipp Emanuel, and Johann Christian Bach, all contributed significantly in some respects to this new style, and to discuss their contributions in the light of certain of their keyboard works is the main purpose of this paper.

## INTRODUCTION

Bach reconciled the polyphonic style of the Renaissance with the monody of the early Baroque....Bach was the last great German master of this Germanic instrumental polyphony which—in spite of the great choral literature—grew from instrumental counterpoint. After him came a new era in which a melodic style based on homophony was to reign. The new style was well on its way when the mature Bach created his works, and it was understandable that with the new music appearing everywhere, his own was looked upon as conservative in tone and aim, and was quickly silenced by the youthful eloquence of the rising style. This decline in polyphony was a reality in the first quarter of the 18th century.<sup>1</sup>

Leng later adds, "Even his own sons smiled at his old-fashioned contrapuntal writing."

The tense polyphonic writing was neither enjoyed nor appreciated by the artists of the Enlightenment and rationalism, whose slogan was the "imitation of nature."<sup>2</sup>

The Baroque idea of elaboration of a single idea was replaced gradually by the newer idea of "dramatic opposition" of duo-thematic material, and its development. Often Baroque melodies are nothing more than rhythmic figures appearing again and again in some new key or elaborated form.

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1 Paul Leng, Music in Western Civilization, New York, W. W. Norton Co., 1941, p. 513.

2 Ibid.

Gradually the duo-thematic form gained prominence, and with it came other stylistic changes which should be noted. The texture is no longer polyphonic but homophonic. Melodies are often superimposed upon harmonic progressions of block chords. The interest is not primarily in elaboration of the material but in the development of small motival figures; all of these foreshadowing the sonatas of Beethoven, Mozart and Haydn.

Instrumental music of the last phase of the German baroque cannot be understood without its Italian antecedents, for in the period from Schütz to Bach, both incentive and style came from Italy, and German art would have been unthinkable without the formative power of Italian music and Italian musicians in Germany.<sup>1</sup>

With regard to the new style of writing the Germans also owed much to the Italians, but although "classical" feeling had pervaded the Italian compositions of this time, the new spirit was not really accepted in Germany until the latter part of the 1700's.

There was a basic difference in the German and Italian artistic natures. The Germans considered "frivolous and flippant"<sup>2</sup> all of the sensuous and sweet qualities in Italian lyricism, the Italians likewise couldn't comprehend the ponderous style of the Germans.<sup>3</sup> One look at the

1 Lang, op. cit.

2 Curt Sachs, The Commonwealth of Art, New York, W. W. Norton Co., 1946.

3 Ibid.

Scarlatti sonatas will reveal these Italian qualities of grace and wit to us.

Bach himself was very much influenced by the Italian style as witnessed by his Italian Concerto, the transcriptions of the Vivaldi concertos, the Double Concerto in C minor for Klavier with its duo-thematic material, and his arrangements of fugues taken from the trio sonatas of Legrenzio, Corelli, and Albinoni.

It remained for his sons, however, to more fully utilize the possibilities of the new style in their works, as we shall soon see. The final flowering of the Viennese-Classical-School came about when a final synthesis of both German and Italian characteristics manifested themselves in the works of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven.

The works discussed have naturally been limited to available editions.

## Chapter I

### THE CONCERTO FORM

In considering the following concertos, and for the purpose of evaluating them properly, we must clarify our thoughts about the form used at the end of the seventeenth century. It was clearly not the "virtuoso" concerto of the late nineteenth century. It was based on the "concerto grosso" form, where two tonal masses are set off against each other. This was by far the most popular instrumental ensemble form of the late seventeenth century. The "antiphonal" idea appears as early as the 1500's with the Gabriellis in Venice, and we see its fullest and finest expression in the concertos of Vivaldi, Corelli and the Italian masters of the seventeenth century.

Clearly this is a problem of the "old" and the "new": the old, being the intricate polyphonic writing of the German School with its emphasis on part-writing, and involved chromaticism, as opposed to the "new", in which a melody based on homophony is to be stressed. In the concertos of Wilhelm Friedemann especially, do we see the two styles merge. The merger is not always successful, however, and one has the feeling that always there is a desire for more personal expression, more simplicity. This appears in the Adagios

especially. With Carl Philipp Emanuel the same can be said, although here we have a much clearer representation of the homophonic idiom and harmony clarity which typifies the Viennese School of the classical period. In Christian Bach's works we have an almost complete manifestation of this classical idiom.

## Chapter II

## THE CONCERTOS OF WILHELM FRIEDEMANN BACH

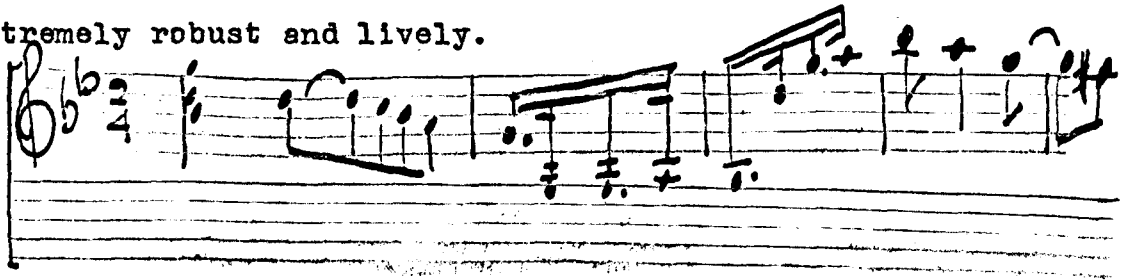
Wilhelm Friedemann Bach wrote five clavier concertos and one double concerto. Before an analysis, however, perhaps a brief biographical sketch may be given. Friedemann was born at Weimar November 22, 1710. Although he had a marked musical talent he was entered at the University as a student of law. He had expert musical instruction from his father, and in 1733 took the post as organist at Dresden. "Friedemann's was a naturally contrapuntally-inclined style, but it was by no means uninfluenced by the strongly Italianate homophonic style which was then in vogue in Dresden."<sup>1</sup> In 1746 Friedemann accepted the organistship at Halle. In 1750 there was serious trouble and relations did not improve in the years which followed. Friedemann was accused of all sorts of misdemeanors but the falsity of these accusations was later proven. Suffice it to say that Friedemann was at last unable to stand Halle any longer. There followed a period of even more bitterness and disillusionment until his death at the age of seventy-four in Berlin. The importance, or rather interest in this brief biography lies in contrasting it with that of Philipp Emanuel's whose life was anything but bitter and impoverished.

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1 Dr. Edward Reeser, The Sons of Bach, Stockholm, Continental Book Co., 1947. P. 9.

Friedemann did not seem to "fit". His life was one of constant want and anxiety and he was deeply embittered by an indifferent public.

We shall begin with an analysis of the G minor Concerto. The chromaticism so characteristic of Friedemann is here everywhere in evidence. The opening theme is extremely robust and lively.



Shortly after a new thought appears, this time in the key of B<sup>b</sup>.



All the material of this first movement is based upon the two themes just given. After the first solo, a tutti appears again in G minor. The theme then goes through a number of keys (V, I, IV, I) but never does it lead to the dominant or allow the solo a chance to modulate. We pass through a number of keys but never establish one for very long. There are no solo passages here of more than three measures. The cembalo seems to be merely supporting the bass. This will lead to an interesting comparison with the important solo passages of Philipp Emanuel later on.

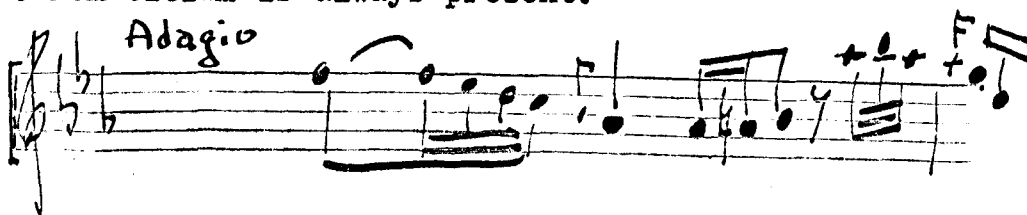
Evidences of his chromaticism are in the typical phrase below.

and also

Another characteristic of this music is its light or thin texture. It never makes a massive impression or effect. Instead of finding a development we see this follows the old concerto form of elaboration of material; first by the solo, then by the tutti through a succession of related keys. In contrast with Philipp Emanuel, Friedemann Bach felt more at home in this quasi-improvisatory style and seems to have disregarded completely the so-called Viennese classical style of writing here.

In the second movement we notice clearly how dependent the strings are on the clavier as a "basso continuo." The

clavier is busy from the beginning to the end. The same chromaticism is always present.



This is an interesting figure assigned to the violins. It is similar to the figure in the first movement.

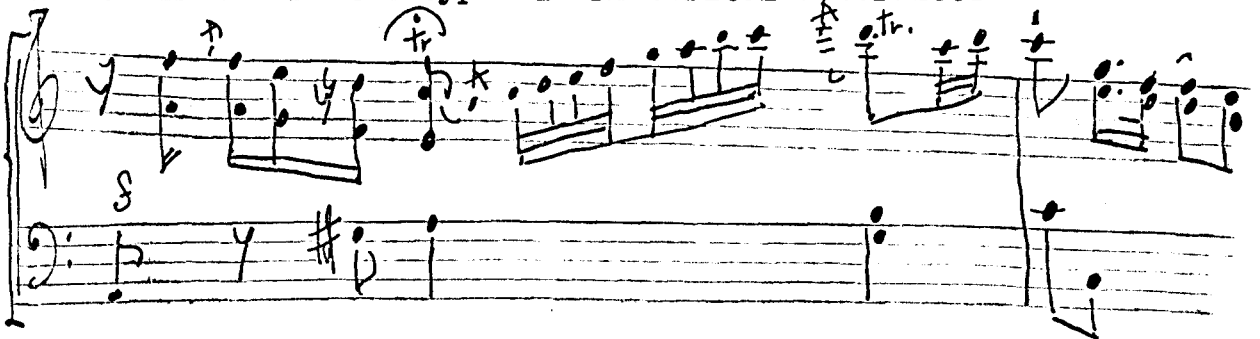
In the lively third movement we find some delightful sequential patterns and dialogue between the solo and tutti. There is some brilliant solo work, and there is also a very definite feeling of a harmonic basis here.

In the E minor Concerto we find more classic proportions both rhythmically and structurally. The opening theme is a strict 8 measure sentence. The formal organization of the work tonally follows a regular pattern of tonic, relative major, dominant, tonic—regular that is for the concerto grosso form. The orchestra always introduces the new key, preparing it for the solo. The whole movement would remind one of the Brandenburg concertos—both in texture and figures; and always because of the underlying thought that interest lies not so much in development of thematic material as in the idea of one theme being presented in a number of different keys first with the solo, then with the tutti.

In the second movement we find a very beautiful

expressive melody. It is very plaintive and very subjective. The interest in this movement lies mainly in the clavier part.

The first melody is elaborated very beautifully in different keys—and the whole effect is one of dialogue between the strings and the clavier. The feeling of key is rather vague, however, owing to the chromaticism of Friedemann's work. There are long sentences. Not at all similar to the balanced phrases of the first movement. These long sentences are very baroque in feeling; one small motive building up and up through a series of neighbor dominants or chromatic intervals. These are the typical "rhetorical utterances"



which are to be found everywhere in J. S. Bach's works. The order and clarity of thought in this second movement lies in the formal key relationships of solo and tutti, rather than in the formal balance of phrases.

The third movement is based mainly on an arpeggio treatment of a few simple harmonics. The solos are brilliant. Although the rhythm and figures hint at Philipp Emanuel, the structure of one phrase is still not felt in the classic meaning of the word.

The F major Concerto contains a delightful canonic effect throughout. It starts off with a vigorous theme, and the solo answers the tutti at the distance of two beats.

This imitation keeps appearing throughout the whole movement. Except for this delightful imitation this seems to be the least successful and the least dynamic of the first movements. The figures are all quite rhythmically classic in the beginning,

but soon the chromaticism returns and also a very vague feeling about the tonality because of the many shifting harmonies.

The second movement presents a very different picture. That this movement was written by the composer of the G minor Concerto hardly seems possible.

The image displays two systems of handwritten musical notation. The first system consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff, both in 3/4 time. The treble staff contains a melodic line with various note values and accidentals, while the bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes. The second system continues the piece, showing a more complex harmonic structure with many accidentals and chromaticism, particularly in the bass line.

There are no indications as to the dates of these compositions. Such a marked difference in style clearly indicates how the "new" forces influenced even Wilhelm Friedemann.

Let us stop for a moment and compare these two works. The first movement of the B minor Concerto is built upon contrapuntal lines and figures. There is great rhythmic

complexity.

As soon as the first violin drops the figure, the second violin picks it up. There must be rhythmic vitality everywhere. That a harmonic scheme results, seems almost accidental. Compare this with the opening bars of the F major concerto and the steady 16th note pattern. Here the listener is kept attentive by always anticipating logical resolutions of harmonies in cadential formulae. However, even in the F major Concerto the solo has the elaborate figuration and chromaticism typical of Friedemann.

But evidences of the two styles are best seen in the second movement. The simplicity of the F major! This has such a personal and yearning quality. It is truly one of the finest. Notice should be also given to the absence of chromaticism. The climaxes build up in a very straightforward manner. (See example 8) The melodic lines have the gracefulness of Mozart's.

In the third movement there appears a different treatment of the solo and tutti. There is more "dialogue" here between the groups whereas we find in the G minor alternate sections between the solo and tutti with very little "interference" when one part is prominent.

We find the same elaborate treatment again in the Double Concerto in E . The second movement especially offers a strong contrast to that of the F major.

## Chapter III

## THE CONCERTOS OF PHILIPP EMANUEL BACH

We shall now consider some of the clavier concertos of Philipp Emanuel before we come to a final evaluation and comparison.

Philipp Emanuel was born in 1714. In contrast with Friedemann, he soon freed himself entirely from the "old" style and definitely preferred the "gallant" style, which about 1740 constituted a link between the contrapuntal style and the expressive homophony. He is regarded by some as the principal musical exponent of the "Age of Feeling" or "Empfindsamkeit". In his music the aesthetic theories of the middle of the eighteenth century found their best practical justification.

In every respect Philipp Emanuel's life was a contrast to Friedemann's. The courses of his youth, however, were much the same, and the law study gave him a thorough intellectual and cultural background which J. S. Bach considered necessary. In 1738 he went to Berlin hoping there to be able to earn his living as a musician. That same year Frederick II of Prussia, who was the crown prince, appointed him cembalist to his court orchestra. He stayed with Frederick for the next thirty years and enjoyed all the prestige and comfort which had been denied Friedemann. There he accompanied the king

on the harpsichord, superintended rehearsals of the orchestra, and extended its repertoire with compositions of his own.

When the affairs of state occupied Frederick to the exclusion of his musical interests—the Seven Years' War in particular—Emanuel applied for the post at Hamburg, which had been held by Telemann, an old friend of the Bach family. Here he held practically the same position his father had in Leipzig. He was the musical director of five churches, director of the music in the municipality, was cantor at the Johanneum, and composer. He died at the age of seventy-four in Berlin.

Most of his instrumental music is attributed to his Berlin days. He left over three hundred compositions, at least fifty of which are clavier concertos. His own preference in instruments was a Silbermann clavichord, and Burney gives an admirable account of Philipp Emanuel's playing on this.

For obvious reasons of availability we shall limit our discussion to six of the concertos. The first to be considered is the G major Concerto for two claviers.<sup>1</sup>

In the opening tutti in  $\frac{4}{4}$  we find all the chromaticism typical of Friedemann.

1 Hugo Riemann, ed., Steingraber, Leipzig.

This acts as an introduction to the graceful first movement

in  $\frac{6}{8}$



What could be more reminiscent of the Brandenburg Concertos than the above figure? Throughout this movement it is given charming sequential treatment. In this work we find an adequate example of the single baroque idea being carried out from beginning to end with hardly a pause. There is the great rhythmic drive of the Brandenburg Concertos. We shall see though that this monothematic idea was not at all typical of Philipp Emanuel, and many first movements suggest definite second themes of importance. As in Friedemann there is elaboration of material, but not development. We finally come to the cadenza which offers a strong contrast with that of Friedemann's in the G minor Concerto.



It is a unique figure because of the fact that the whole spirit of the movement is baroque. It foreshadows the cadenzas of Mozart and Beethoven and is definitely pianistic.

An interesting fact about this second movement is that here, too, the figure of the first movement (of the introduction) is presented.

The whole second movement is an elaboration on the introduction theme. The Adagio ends on the dominant leading into the Allegro, a  $\frac{3}{4}$  movement with a graceful triplet figure. The ending of a movement on the dominant is characteristic of Philipp Emanuel.

The device of writing the second and third movements consecutively so that no pause was possible between the themes may have been a concession to the Italian

Style—but even this subterfuge did not create any impression of coherence such as that obtained in a more subtle manner by Beethoven.<sup>1</sup>

Would this then be a reason for his elementary use of the "cyclic form" which we find here? We are to come across another instance in another concerto where the name theme is used in more than one movement.

The suggestion of duality of themes is noted in the double concerto in E<sup>b</sup>.

The second theme is felt to be in the dominant even though the tutti soon returns to E major. When the solo enters a rather unusual thing occurs; instead of being based

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1 Albert I. Wier, The Pianoforte and its Makers, New York, Longmans, Green & Co., 1940, p. 107.

on previous tutti themes, it has a new idea of its own:



It plays a large part in the working out of the movement although no actual development takes place. The last solo making the transition back to E has great freedom in form. The solo has a rather long improvisatory passage leading to the final tutti. It seems as if there were always a striving for more freedom for the solo instrument, and certainly we should notice how pianistic these passages are in contrast to Friedemann's.

Emanuel Bach's favorite instrument was the clavichord to be sure. But many of his works were written for the piano. As Lang points out:

It is true that the weeds of the rococo style—grace notes, embellishments, flourishes, sighs—are present in his music, sometimes in profusion; but this could not have been otherwise, because no true artist, however revolutionary, can deny his times and environment.... He made use of the ornamentation demanded by his era, but he did not leave its execution to the fancy of the player.... Thus the ornamented superstructure was converted into a constructive integral part of his style. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Music in Western Civilization, p. 596.

The duality of themes is also seen in the Larghetto.

*Solo*

*tutti*

1<sup>st</sup> Theme

2<sup>nd</sup> Theme

The whole movement is based on alternate entrances of solo and tutti with these two themes. The movement concludes with the second theme on the dominant and leads to the final movement.

We are confronted with an unusual form in the C minor double Concerto. The first movement ends on the dominant, leading into the Adagio. The Adagio ends on the dominant E leading to a Minuet in E. After several solo and tutti entrances, the last of which ends on a diminished seventh, the Minuet leads into an Allegro Assai which has the same theme as the first movement.

3<sup>rd</sup> Mov.

This tutti leads back after a solo passage to a tutti in C minor and this is elaborated throughout the movement.

We shall pass over the D major Concerto (double) with only a few comments. The first movement contains an Allegro Molto changing to an Andante for the solo, and then back to an Allegro again.

The second movement contains all the fussiness of baroque ornamentation.

The D major concerto again contains evidences of duo-thematic material.

The most remarkable case of actual development occurs in the double concerto in E<sup>b</sup> written for Cembalo and Forte-piano.

Here the tutti has a "fragment" which is the germ of the whole movement.

A.

In the development the following takes place. The solo is answered by the tutti (B) in inversion.

Solo

B.

Tutti

This little "fragment" also appears in the development

C.

D.

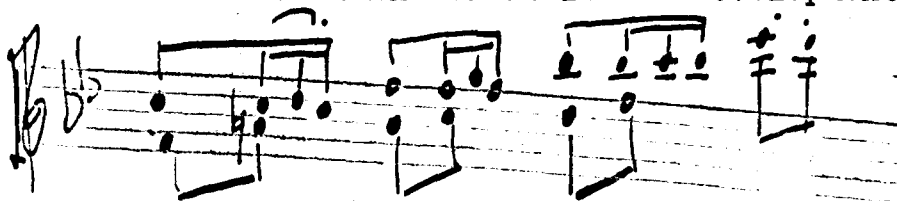
Finally, in D we have but a "fragment" of a fragment and it fades away to a pianissimo. Willi Apel in his Masters of the Keyboard discusses this "motive" technique.

Particularly interesting is the development section [Mozart Sonatas] for it reveals an admirable grasp and command of that "motival" technique which represents the final step in the evolution of the classical sonata form. The term "motival" indicates that a piece or a section in question is based not on full length melodies or phrases, but on brief though self-contained fragments there-of. A glance at the development sections of the two movements by Haydn will illustrate the difference between the earlier method in which full phrases prevail, and the novel technique of motive which became established in the late works of Haydn and Mozart and was brought to the highest perfection by Beethoven and Brahms.<sup>1</sup>

Let us compare the preceding fragment of Philipp Emanuel's with the following from a sonata of Haydn. This is the "motive" of the opening measures of the Haydn.



This is the treatment of it in the development.



In regard to Haydn, Apel has the following to say:

His early sonatas clearly reveal not only the influence of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, but also that decisive change from

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1 Willi Apel, Masters of the Keyboard, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1947. p. 199

studied expressiveness to natural expression which inaugurated a new era of musical language.

For our discussion here, the importance in comparing the two is to show how far-reaching these novel methods of treatment in Philipp Emanuel Bach's works have been.

## Chapter IV

## AN EVALUATION OF THE CONCERTOS

In our final evaluation, we notice that the constant need for a "basso continuo" disappears in Philipp Emanuel's concertos. Neither the cembalo nor bass are required to so strictly adhere to this function. There is good reason for this, because in a great many of his works the harmonic idiom is already felt, in contrast to the thin-textured contrapuntal lines of the cembalo solos in W. F. Bach. In Philipp Emanuel we often have patterns of block chords. There is no rhythmical independence or rather inter-dependence of voices as in Friedemann. In Philipp Emanuel the interest of material quite often lies in an elementary development technique, whereas in Friedemann interest and balance are achieved through an exposition of the material by the tutti, and then the elaboration of this material by alternate solos and tutti, through a series of related keys.

Philipp Emanuel often maintains interest in his string writing by the presentation of his themes by different instruments. He seems to delight in giving themes first to one instrument, then another, and then playfully letting the solos carry on with them. In this he seems to foreshadow Beethoven's own personal language.

The harmonic rhythm is not fast in many of his works because transformation of ideas plays such a large part in his writing; as contrasted to the elaboration of Friedemann. The listener is kept attentive by the different entrances of the voices with the same material as contrasted with the chromaticism of Wilhelm Friedemann. Especially is this true of the slow movements.

The general patterns in Philipp Emanuel's works are diatonic. In many instances, however, the color of Friedemann's profuse chromaticism is evident and we are at a loss as to whose composition we are analyzing. This last statement also applies to Friedemann's work—especially the slow movement of the F major Concerto, where there is a complete lack of chromaticism and other characteristics of his style.

## Chapter V

## THE SONATA

The growing sonata principle, based on dualism and contrast, excluded the possibility of two threads deploying simultaneously; for while it welcomed a number of themes, the association of these with certain positions in the tonality was jeopardized by the introduction of both the main and subsidiary group in the same key. The only solution was to reduce the *tuttis* and the *ritornels*, enlarging and developing what used to be the solo passages, and providing them with a continuity determined by the new principles of thematic construction.<sup>1</sup>

Having lost the backing of polyphonic motor power, the composers first adopted a very simple technique consisting of a repetition of motives coupled with sequential motion. This technique was borrowed from the fabric of the suite, which created its musical texture by weaving motives in repetition, sequential progression, and contrapuntal recasting.<sup>2</sup>

The road to the classical sonata was a long one, however, with many unsuccessful attempts made along the way. The failures were due mainly to the inability to synthesize these "melodic fragments" or "motives" into a unified whole; and there appeared a diffuseness, a lack of direction in many of these early sonatas.

Many of the Italian sonatas served as fruitful models

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1 Lang, Music in Western Civilization, p. 599.

2 Ibid., p. 600.

for the pre-classical German writers, but the interest lay chiefly in the delightful ideas they embodied, not in the development of these ideas. In fact the form of these early sonatas is binary for the most part, and not ternary.

Gradually a "large bold form" began to take shape; the melodic fragments lost their superficial character and began to appear as the "product of a freely flowing musical imagination."<sup>1</sup>

The Germans knit together these ideas much more completely than the Italians, and finally we see the full flowering of the sonata-form with its logical eloquent development in the classical sonatas of Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven.

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1 Lang, Music in Western Civilization, p. 600.

## Chapter VI

## THE EVOLUTION OF KEYBOARD INSTRUMENTS

As with the form of the seventeenth century concerto, only by understanding the medium of expression through which these keyboard works found voice, can we truly and clearly evaluate them, and appreciate them for their full intrinsic worth.

There was no thunderous piano of today for Friedemann or Philipp Emanuel. The clavichord was the favorite instrument of both.

The clavichord differed considerably from the harpsichord in its method of tone production.

Whereas in the harpsichord the strings are plucked from below by quills put in action by a mechanism, operated from the finger-board, in the clavichord the strings are subjected to a sort of pressure-stroke from below, by small pieces of metal similarly put in action.<sup>1</sup> These pieces of metal are called tangents.

The tone quality of the clavichord is soft and delicate, which makes it much more suitable for small rooms, and intimate gatherings.

Unlike the harpsichord, the tone of the clavichord can be considerably altered by means of the touch. Also by a sort

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<sup>1</sup> Percy Scholes, Oxford Companion to Music, London, N.Y., Oxford University Press, 1943, p. 175.

of tremolo action of the finger on the keyboard, a vibratory prolongation can be achieved, called in German "bebung".

Philipp Emanuel Bach was a notable clavichordist. Burney's description of Bach's playing this instrument is most adequate to bear this out.

The harpsichord often had two keyboards, sometimes three. The tone could not be sustained like that of the clavichord, and to compensate for this short duration, a specific treatment was needed for melodies and sustained lines. The problem was met by the art of "embellishment"; and this largely accounts for the profusion of embellishing figures so often found in the works of this period.

There arose a desire, of course, for some instrument which would combine the crescendo and diminuendo of the clavichord with the brilliancy of the harpsichord. Couperin states in the preface of his first book of Harpsichord Pieces,

The harpsichord is perfect as to its compass, and brilliant in itself, but as it is impossible to swell out or diminish the volume of its sound, I shall always feel grateful to any who, by the exercise of infinite art supported by fine taste, contrive to render this instrument capable of expression.<sup>1</sup>

Cristofori is usually accredited with the invention of the pianoforte. His intention, however, was taken up in Germany by Silbermann (1683-1753). One of his pianos was submitted to Johann Sebastian Bach for approval, but Bach,

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1 Scholes, Oxford Companion to Music, p. 712.

like his son Philipp Emanuel, was never in complete sympathy with this instrument.

Much of this early music was written indifferently for keyboard instruments. But gradually a pianoforte style evolved—manifestations of which are seen repeatedly in Philipp Emanuel. Reference should be made to the last double concerto analyzed, written for Cembalo and Forte-piano.

Like Eckardt in Paris 5 years before, Christian Bach was the first popularizer of the new instrument in London, which he was not only the first to play in public in the English capital, but which since the appearance in 1768 of his "Six Sonatas Pour le Clavicin ou le Piano Forte" he approved as entirely suitable for the playing of his own music.<sup>1</sup>

Christian Bach's music is definitely pianistic. Mozart was an enthusiastic admirer of his, and fully acknowledged his debt of gratitude to Christian Bach's works which served as fruitful models for his own.

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1 Reeser, The Sons of Bach, p. 56

## Chapter VII

## THE SONATAS OF PHILIPP EMANUEL BACH

We usually think of this musician as a "forerunner" of the classical period, but a deeper penetration into his works will show him to be a far greater composer in his own right than history usually acknowledges.

The interest lies not so much in the formal organization of his works as in the ideas they embody. The forms for the most part are binary in both the first and third movements.

The sonatas selected for analysis are from the Universal Edition, edited by Heinrich Schenker.

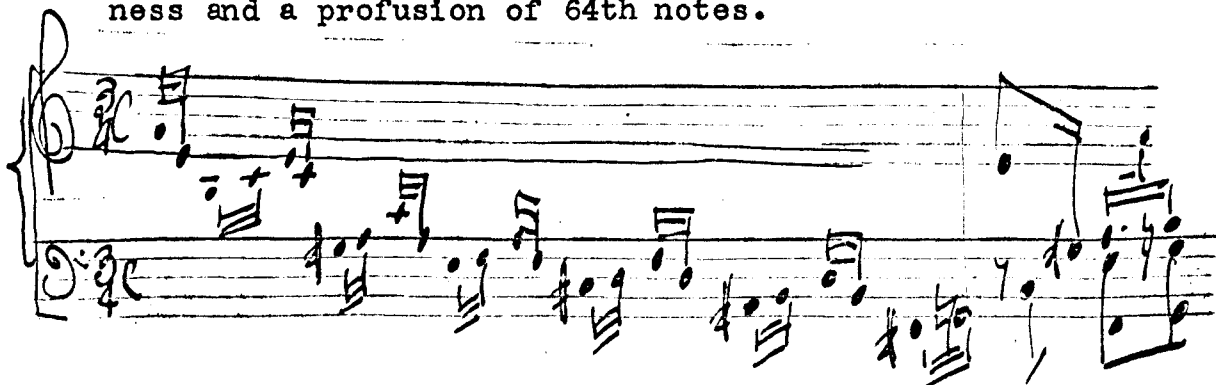
In No. 2 the first movement ends on a diminished seventh chord; a characteristic of Philipp Emanuel we have noted before in the concertos. For sheer playfulness the third movement themes should be compared with Haydn.



No. 3 begins with a most dramatic opening which suggests the treatment used by Beethoven in the introduction of his



The influence of Scarlatti is seen in No. 4, where there is a wealth of rippling arpeggio patterns, playfulness and a profusion of 64th notes.



Scarlatti had little regard for fugal construction, dance foundations of the suite, or contrapuntal traditions. Running passages of 3rds and 6ths, broken chords in contrary motion, the necessity of quickly crossing the hands...his speech is pungent, decisive. The short themes are like rapier thrusts. They are repeated with singular insistence. He loves to surprise with rhythm. He is seldom sentimental. The slow movements bore him. Ideas are thick and fast; they run at lightning speed; yet they do not jostle each other, for the expression is pellucid. The idea is never lost in development.<sup>1</sup>

No. 5 also offers another interesting comparison with Scarlatti.

Handwritten musical notation for No. 5, consisting of two staves (treble and bass clef). The music is in G major and 3/4 time. The treble staff contains a series of chords and single notes, while the bass staff features a continuous stream of sixteenth notes. A handwritten note 'first idea' is written below the beginning of the bass staff.

1 Philip Hale, Editor's Notes, Scarlatti Sonatas, Schirmer.

Handwritten musical score for the first system. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The treble staff contains several measures of music, including a sequence of notes with stems pointing down, followed by a measure with a flat sign and a note. The bass staff contains a few notes, including a prominent eighth note. The number '36' is written in the upper right corner of the system.

Second idea

Handwritten musical score for the second system. It features two staves, treble and bass clef. The treble staff has a 2/4 time signature and contains several measures of music with various note values and stems. The bass staff contains a few notes. The text 'No. 6' is written above the treble staff, and 'Scarlatti' is written above the bass staff with an arrow pointing to the right.

No. 6 presents duo-thematic material.

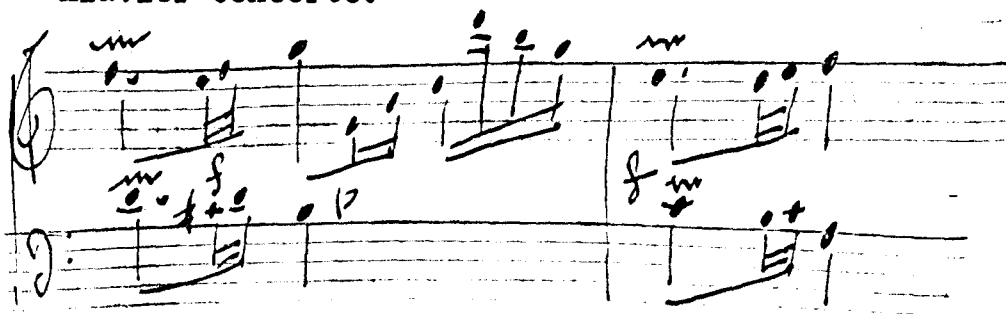
Handwritten musical score for the third system. It features two staves, treble and bass clef. The treble staff has a 3/4 time signature and contains several measures of music, including a circled '3' and wavy lines above the staff. The bass staff contains a few notes. The text 'Tr.' is written above the treble staff.

Handwritten musical score for the fourth system. It features two staves, treble and bass clef. The treble staff contains several measures of music with various note values and stems. The bass staff contains a few notes. This system continues the musical notation from the previous systems.

Compare this second theme with the third movement of the Haydn Sonata in G major, No. 10 Schirmer Edition.

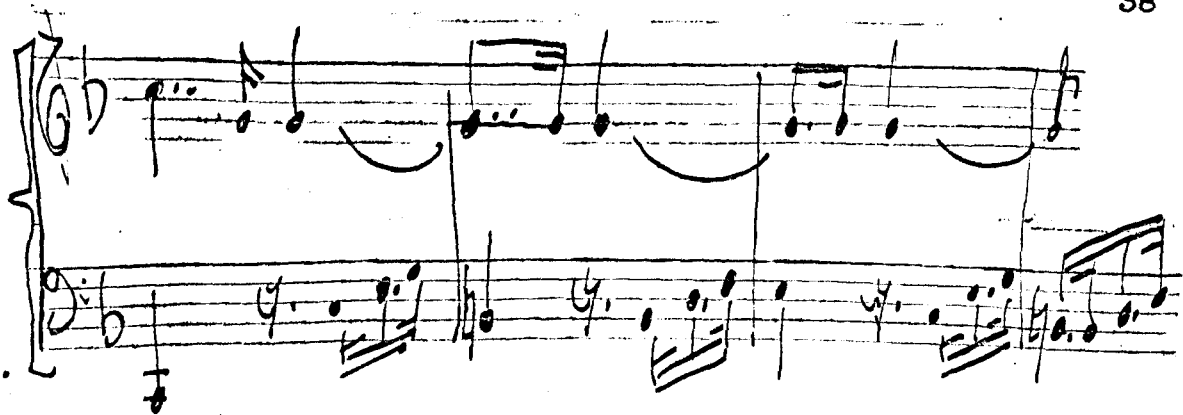


In the development the figure is inverted as in the C minor Klavier Concerto.

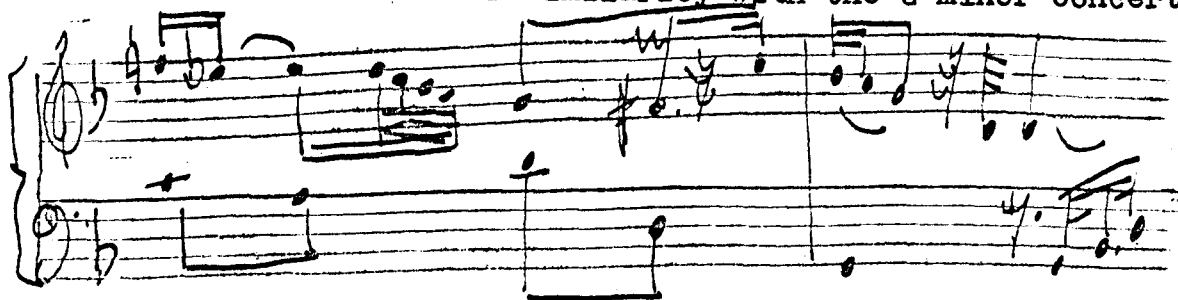


No. 7 leads us to a comparison with Friedemann Bach's G minor Concerto. Here there is a decided linear effect with an absence of a chordal harmonic basis. The profuse chromaticism and intricate rhythm also remind us of the G minor Concerto.





Again in working back to the tonic certain figures must be observed to see their similarity with the G minor Concerto.



Here, indeed, are excellent examples of the excessive use of ornamentation of which Philipp Emanuel was guilty at times.



Lang states,

He made use of the ornamentation demanded by his era, but he did not leave its execution to the fancy of the player. The rococo clavier players did not like to let a single note pass without embellishments, but in his treatise Bach recommended moderation, reminding his readers that when too much ornamentation is used the affections "are clouded."<sup>1</sup>

These sonatas selected will begin to give an insight into the fruitful experimentations of the pre-classical period, and show how far these "fore-runners" actually had laid the groundwork for the later sonatas of Haydn and Beethoven.

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1 Lang, Music in Western Civilization, p. 596.

## Chapter VIII

## THE SONATAS OF JOHANN CHRISTIAN BACH

Johann Christian Bach was born in Leipzig, 1735.

When his father died, he went to the home of his brother Carl Philipp Emanuel, and later to Italy. As his love for opera writing finally caused a break with his patron who wished him to stay within the realm of religious writing, Christian Bach left for England. He found great favor at the court of George III, and his compositions of this period all bear dedication to his generous patrons. However, he died in London practically forgotten and in debt.

There is no question as to the great influence his works must have had on the young Mozart.

In the C minor Sonata No. 9 (Peters Edition)<sup>1</sup> there are definitely two themes; one in C minor, the second in E major. The movement is binary with little real development however, and it closes on the dominant, something reminiscent of Philipp Emanuel.

Notice the "Alberti-bass" figure, which plays so important a role in classical pianoforte literature. This is

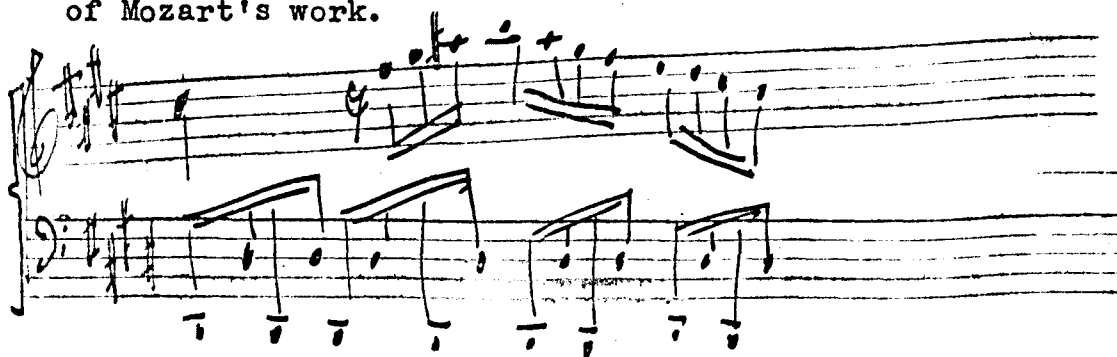


1 Ludwig Landshoff, ed., Peters Edition, Leipzig.

a strange contrast indeed with the second movement, which is a 3 part fugue..



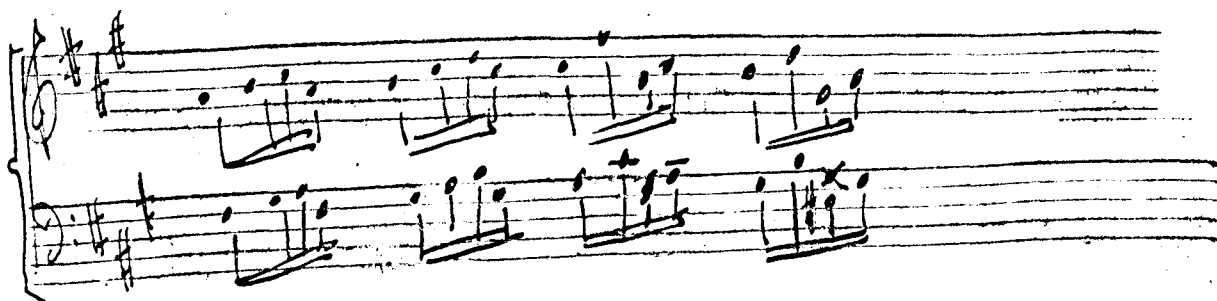
This subject is treated in strict contrapuntal manner and is a most remarkable second movement to find between two binary movements of Rococo grace and symmetry. In No. 1, we see the broken-chord <sup>octaves</sup> accompaniment figure so typical of Mozart's work.



The third movement is a rondo form, fully worked out with the following key scheme for the subsidiary themes: dominant, relative minor, sub-mediante, and mediant.

No. 2 falls short of a real development. Two contrasting ideas are presented in tonic and dominant, but very little is done with them. There is excessive arpeggio figuration here, and one can see the lack of clarity and

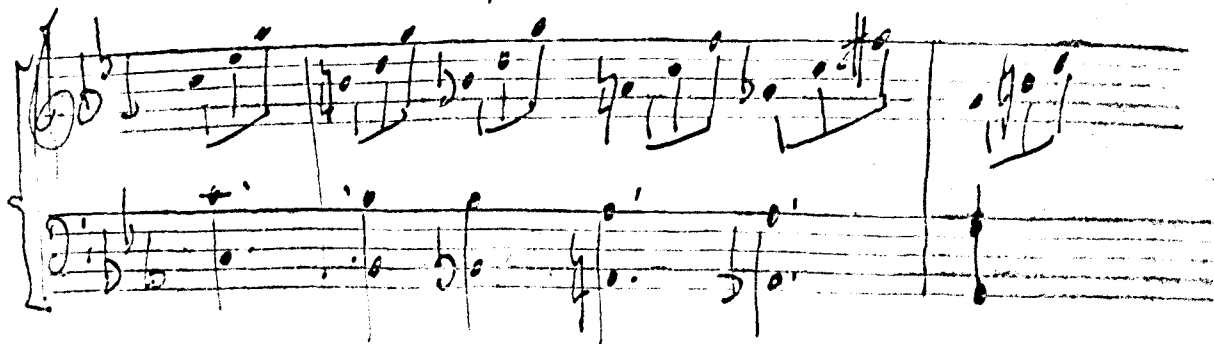
order in a contrast with Mozart's sonatas. This sonata shows perhaps quite plainly to what extent the melodic gift of Mozart's was lacking in Christian Bach. There are melodic passages of great beauty to be sure, but many of the movements are guilty of excessive arpeggio patterns such as the following:



The drive and rollicking good humor of Beethoven are seen in the Prestissimo of No. 5.



Compare with Beethoven: Op. 13  
Sonata



In No. 8 we come to one of the few really interesting treatments of a subject:

The image displays three systems of handwritten musical notation, likely a sonata movement. Each system consists of two staves, a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The music is written in a style characteristic of the 18th century, with a focus on melodic development and harmonic structure. The first system shows a clear thematic statement in the treble staff, with the bass staff providing a supporting accompaniment. The second system continues the melodic line, showing some chromatic movement and a change in the bass line's texture. The third system concludes the passage with a final cadence, marked by a double bar line and a repeat sign in the treble staff.

Christian Bach's sonatas show the decided influence of Neapolitan melodic style. The dualism of thematic material is most always in evidence, but the working out of this material had to be left to the genius of Mozart. The ideas

are numerous; in fact too numerous, because it was this very lack of integration which made Christian Bach fail to achieve a real ternary-form. The grace, charm, delicacy of his style cannot be underestimated, however; and the classical balance of phrases, the strict 8-measure sentences are everywhere to be seen. His melodies when they do appear are beautifully rounded, but they are not transformed; they are merely presented and ornamented somewhat. His contributions to the growing school, however, were far from insignificant, but the real relationship of material to form was yet to be worked out.

## CONCLUSION

What we oftentimes see as the work or inspiration of one great man is really the accumulation of many lesser men's efforts given expression by a particular genius.

There was no easy or quick road which led to the classicism of the eighteenth century.

The eighteenth century was engrossed in liberation from the Baroque—from all the broad lines, the intensity, and rhetoric which so typified that period; and it took many pioneers to lay the groundwork for the classicism which followed.

The history of this struggle started in the seventeenth twenties in Italy, passed through the periods we have just been discussing, and reached its climax in the mighty symphonies of Beethoven.

The musicians of this transition period sought vainly to make the new style as integral and logical as the form of the fugue in the Baroque style. They were not content with the "gallant" writing. Somehow we cannot imagine writers of the nature of Friedemann Bach and Philipp Emanuel being satisfied with writing of such superficial and delicate qualities.

The "Sturm und Drang" spirit imbued them with a longing for an expressive medium much more suitable to their profound ideas.

We have traced the originality of Friedemann's writing through to the influence of Philipp Emanuel and his unique method of material treatment; and are now, after surveying the classical spirit found in Christian Bach's works, ready to acknowledge the profound influence these men exerted on the classical Viennese-School of the eighteenth century.

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