

INTRODUCTION

Composed in the last year of his life, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's three quartets (Wq 93–95) are striking works, written in an extravagant, expressive style, and scored for the unusual combination of flute, viola, and keyboard. While many of Bach's chamber pieces enjoyed wide dissemination in print and manuscript, his quartets found private consumption among only a few connoisseur performers, remaining largely unknown until their rediscovery in the early twentieth century by Ernst Fritz Schmid, who published editions of them in 1952.

The entries for these three works comprise an individual section of Bach's estate catalogue (NV 1790, pp. 51–52), labeled "Quartetten, fürs Clavier, Flöte, Bratsche und Baß." All three works were composed in Hamburg in 1788. That year, Sara Levy appears to have commissioned from Bach not only the Concerto in E-flat Major for Harpsichord and Fortepiano (Wq 47), but also, it seems, the three quartets. For Wq 47, and at least for Wq 94 and 95, Levy received fair copies of the works in Bach's own hand—with the score for Wq 47 (now preserved in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn-Archiv, N. Mus. SA 4) most likely arriving only after Bach's death. Of the three quartet autographs, only the two preserved in D-B, SA 3328 are extant. While it seems almost certain that Bach would have sent Wq 93 to Levy as well, no trace of his autograph remains; nor does any title page or dedication that Bach may have attached to his set of quartets.

A later title page preserved in the collection of the Sing-Akademie, however, reflects the provenance of the autograph scores. D-B, SA 3327 is a composite manuscript that belonged to Carl Friedrich Zelter, containing secondary copies of Wq 93 and 94. It includes a title page in Zelter's hand, which reads: "Drey Quartetten für Fortepiano, Flöte und Bratsche von Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach." This is followed by incipits for all three quartets; at the bottom of the page, Zelter has added (with his initial, "Z."): "die beyden letzten Quartetten sind von des Componisten eigener Hand geschrieben, und ein Geschenk der Madam Sara Levi Gebohrene Itzig." (the last two quartets were written in the composer's own hand, and [were] a present from Madam Sara Levy, née Itzig). This title page, then, had ear-

lier also accompanied the two autographs now kept separately in SA 3328. It is reproduced in the present facsimile, together with the two extant autograph scores. (The verso of the title page, not included here, has the opening of Wq 93 in the hand of an unknown copyist.)

Bach's quartets are further transmitted in only a handful of additional manuscripts, including complete sets of parts (in B-Bc) copied for the collector Johann Jakob Heinrich Westphal, and scores for Wq 93 and 94 from the collection of Haydn (in H-Bn). No dates appear in Bach's autograph from Sara Levy's collection, nor in any of the Westphal parts. However, in copies of the scores for Wq 93 and 94 acquired by Haydn, the copyist Johann Heinrich Michel did include dates. Wq 94 was completed on 27 January 1788, and Wq 93 sometime earlier that same month (its annotation simply reads "Mense Jan: 88."). Therefore, the quartets appear to be among the first works of the composer's last year, likely preceding other works known to date from 1788.

Bach's idea of these works as quartets emerges logically from his view of the trio—that is, from a genre categorization based upon the number of individual contrapuntal lines, rather than the number of instruments. If a trio can employ only two players (who provide a three-part texture), then a quartet may be considered in the same way, with the keyboard providing two of the lines. In the quartets, each of the four lines maintains an elegant importance. If the unusual instrumentation of flute, viola, and keyboard was part of Sara Levy's request (as seems likely for these pieces), Bach has innovatively made the most of it. Rather than keep a low, inner profile for the viola, he allows its reedy middle range often to assume an equal partnership, assigning it solo or duet roles in many instances.¹ Throughout the three quartets, Bach's style is inventive in harmony, expressive pathos, and motivic exploration; at one time or another, each instrument surprises with wit, angular leaps or demanding virtuoso figuration.

1. Repertory evidence in the Levy collection suggests that Sara Levy's husband, Samuel Salomon Levy, may have been a violist; see Peter Wollny, "Ein förmlicher Sebastian und Philipp Emanuel Bach-Kultus": Sara Levy und ihr musikalisches Wirken (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2010), 39–40.

The composite manuscript SA 3328 contains Bach's autograph scores of Wq 94 and 95 in fair copy. In both quartets, a late unknown hand has added pencil annotations (including brackets and various fully notated phrases) beneath the keyboard staff II to indicate a part for violoncello—though Bach himself offers no indication that his quartets require this additional instrument.² Each fascicle contains individual pagination in Bach's hand; continuous foliation has been added in pencil by a recent hand. Bach's own corrections to his fair copy are few, though most visible in movement iii of Wq 95. Here, he has rewritten various measures, though many of his earlier readings are difficult to decipher. Throughout this movement, he has written over each of his original "in unisono" directives in the keyboard line, changing them to "in Octaven". On the first page of Wq 94, Bach has added a specific directive for playing the recurring dotted passages in movement i. Below the first system of the score, he has noted: "NB die geschwinden Noten nach den Punkten werden abgestoßen" (NB: the quick notes after the dots should be detached).

Together, the three quartets form a set, which Bach had apparently intended to publish, had he only lived long enough to do so. In a letter of 4 July 1805 to the Leipzig publishers Hoffmeister & Kühnel (sent along with manuscripts of several works by Bach), J.J.H. Westphal writes:

Shortly before his death, Bach had prepared 3 Clavier Quartets with the accompaniment of flute and viola; he intended to publish them—however, he died before he could see it through. I can also send these quartets to you, if you wish to have them. The last works of the dearly departed Bach I own almost exclusively, as his daughter has personally assured me.³

Without this intended publication, Bach's last major chamber works remained exclusively in private hands during the decades following their composition, their reception associated only with the circles of Sara Levy, Zelter, Haydn, and Westphal.

A critical edition of all three quartets, Wq 93–95, is published in CPEB: CW, II/5. We are grateful to the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin for giving us permission to publish a facsimile of the autographs of Wq 94 and 95.

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2. In a letter to Westphal on 7 October 1791, Johanna Maria Bach assures Westphal that he already has a complete copy of the quartets: "Zu den Quartetten ist kein anderer Baß, als der der Clavierparthie, sonst hätten ihn Ew. Wohlgeb. gewiß gleich mit erhalten." (In the quartets, there is no other bass than that of the keyboard part—otherwise Your Grace would certainly have already received it as well). See Manfred Hermann Schmid, "Das Geschäft mit dem Nachlaß von C.Ph.E. Bach: Neue Dokumente zur Westphal-Sammlung des Conservatoire Royal de Musique und der Bibliothéque Royale de Belgique in Brüssel," *Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach und die europäische Musikkultur des mittleren 18. Jahrhunderts: Bericht über das Internationale Symposium der Joachim Jungius-Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften Hamburg*, 29. September–2. Oktober 1988, ed. Hans Joachim Marx (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), 496. For further description of SA 3328, see Wolfram Enßlin, *Die Bach-Quellen der Sing-Akademie zu Berlin: Katalog*, 2 vols., *Leipziger Beiträge zur Bach-Forschung* 8 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2006), 301, and CPEB: CW, II/5.

3. "Noch kurz vor seinem Tode wurde er mit 3 Clavier Quartetten mit Begleit[ung] einer Flöte und Bratsche fertig, diese hatte er zum Druck bestimmt, starb aber darüber weg. Ich kann Ihnen diese Quartetten, wenn Sie Belieben dazu haben, auch communiciren. Die letzten Arbeiten des seel[igen] Bach besitze ich fast ausschließlich allein, wie mir die Tochter selbst versichert hat." Original text quoted in Ulrich Leisinger and Peter Wollny, *Die Bach-Quellen der Bibliotheken in Brüssel: Katalog*, *Leipziger Beiträge zur Bach-Forschung* 2 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1997), 43. The packet of works that Westphal sent along with his letter included Wq 67, 80, and 79.