

INTRODUCTION

In contrast to the symphonies Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach composed for the musical public of Berlin between 1741 and 1762, with the six works of Wq 182 he turned his attention toward music for the connoisseur. He composed this set of symphonies, all scored for four-part string orchestra with continuo, in Hamburg in 1773 to fulfill a commission from Baron Gottfried van Swieten. Bach included these symphonies as the final item in the numbered list of compositions he compiled for his 1773 autobiography, where he noted that they were written “to order” (auf Verlangen) though he did not identify the recipient.¹

Commission and Composition

Unfortunately, neither the original request nor any other correspondence between van Swieten and Bach survives, despite the fact that van Swieten eventually became an important patron and ardent promoter of Bach’s music.² They had not met at the time of this commission; Bach had left Berlin for Hamburg in 1768 while van Swieten did not arrive there until 1770 when he was appointed Austrian ambassador to the court. Probably Johann Philipp Kirnberger introduced van Swieten to Bach’s music, as he was the common link between the two.³ From 1772 van Swieten’s name frequently appeared on lists of subscribers to Bach’s publications. Furthermore, he may have acted as distributor since he often purchased multiple copies, in some cases as many as the largest music dealers.⁴ It was van Swieten who put Bach in contact with the Viennese mu-

sic dealer Artaria.⁵ In 1781 Bach dedicated his third set of sonatas and rondos “für Kenner und Liebhaber,” Wq 57, to van Swieten, perhaps in appreciation. Though they must have eventually corresponded regularly there is no proof that they actually met. In a 1776 letter to Breitkopf, Bach referenced friends who had collected subscriptions on his behalf as well as several “unknown patrons,” including van Swieten, who had done the same, suggesting that at that time their contact was limited.⁶

Bach wrote many of his works “to order,” catering to the tastes and abilities of his recipients, and he acknowledged the limitations this caused him in an oft-quoted passage from his autobiography: “Because I have had to compose most of my works for specific individuals and for the public, I have always been more restrained in them than in the few pieces I have written merely for myself.”⁷ Bach clearly distinguished between public music—in which he toned down his style for broad popular appeal and made concessions to the limited abilities of amateurs—and private music for himself or a small group of connoisseurs in which he was freed from technical and aesthetic constraints. His concern with music destined for publication was to boost sales by appealing to a wide audience. For Bach this dichotomy played out between music that would be printed and music that would remain unpublished and of limited distribution. As he advised the composer Johann Christoph Kühnau: “In things that are to be printed, and therefore are for everyone, be less artistic and give more sugar. . . . In things that are not to be printed, allow your diligence full rein.”⁸

1. *Autobiography*, 207.

2. For more on van Swieten’s activities as a patron see Edward Olleson, “Patron of Haydn and Mozart,” *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 89 (1962–3): 63–74, and Gudrun Busch, “Der österreichischer Botschafter Gottfried van Swieten, das Berliner Musikleben 1771–1777 und die Musik C.P.E. Bachs,” *Frankfurt/Oder 1994*, 108–62.

3. Edward Olleson, “Gottfried, Baron van Swieten and His Influence on Haydn and Mozart,” (Ph.D. diss., Oxford University, 1967), 62.

4. For example, he purchased twelve copies of the third collection of accompanied sonatas, Wq 91 (letter of Bach to Breitkopf, 9 August 1777, *CPEB-Letters*, 111–13; *CPEB-Briefe*, 1:645–47), and 25 copies of the *Heilig*, Wq 217 (subscription list from 1779). See Ottenberg, 167. The surviving subscription lists appear in *CPEB-Briefe*, 2:1450–1522.

5. See letter of Bach to Artaria, 14 July 1779, *CPEB-Letters*, 141; *CPEB-Briefe*, 1:758.

6. Letter of 18 June 1776, *CPEB-Letters*, 97; *CPEB-Briefe*, 1:578–79.

7. “Weil ich meine meisten Arbeiten für gewisse Personen und fürs Publikum habe machen müssen, so bin ich dadurch allezeit mehr gebunden gewesen, als bey den wenigen Stücken, welche ich bloß für mich verfertigt habe.” *Autobiography*, 208; trans. in William S. Newman, “Emanuel Bach’s Autobiography,” *MQ* 51 (1965): 371.

8. “Bey Sächen, die zum Druck, also für Jedermann, bestimmt sind, seyn Sie weniger künstlich und geben mehr Zucker. . . . In Sächen, die nicht sollen gedruckt warden, lassen Sie Ihrem Fleisse den vollkommnen Lauf.” Letter of 31 August 1784, *CPEB-Letters*, 213; *CPEB-Briefe*, 2:1036.

Our knowledge of the commission is scanty and the sources that document it are sparse. A 1789 letter from the Hamburg music dealer Johann Christoph Westphal to the Schwerin Bach collector Johann Jacob Heinrich Westphal (discussed below), as well as an entry from Georg Poelchau's 1832 catalogue of his manuscript collection, both identify van Swieten as the recipient of the Wq 182 symphonies.⁹ The only known account to give any details of the commission is a passage from Johann Friedrich Reichardt's autobiography, written forty years after the fact and published in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*.¹⁰ If the majority of commissions Bach received caused him to temper his style, the one he received from van Swieten must have been exceptional as he deliberately requested difficult and sophisticated music. Indeed, the supposed wording that we have secondhand from Reichardt seems a direct response to Bach's claims about being constrained when writing for specific individuals: it explicitly instructed Bach to be subject to no restrictions and to allow his artistic expression free rein without any consideration for the difficulties that would arise for the performers.¹¹ The nature of this request may be similar to commissions Bach received from Sara Levy, another Berlin patron, who was herself a virtuoso and would have been capable of playing Bach's most esoteric and difficult music. She is said to have requested music for connoisseurs.¹²

Reception

Reichardt praised the symphonies that resulted from van Swieten's commission for their "original and bold flow of ideas" and the "great diversity and novelty in their forms and surprise effects."¹³ With their virtuosic passagework, startling modulations, and abrupt contrasts in material, dynamics, and key both within and across movements,

they would have been difficult for amateurs and thought more appropriate for connoisseurs.¹⁴ They share some outward features with Bach's earlier symphonies in that they all have three movements with no repeats in the first movement, and avoid rondos and minuets; they depart from the earlier works in their adventurous character. One symptom of the bolder approach in these works is the frequent use of remote keys in the middle movements: E major in Symphony I in G Major; D major in Symphony II in B-flat Major; F major in Symphony IV in A Major; and F-sharp minor in Symphony VI in E Major. A notable feature in these symphonies is the use of elision between movements, with the last measures of one movement functioning as harmonic transition to the next. Bach had used this technique in earlier works, for example the Symphony in D Major, Wq 176, where the first movement ends on the dominant of the following movement in the manner of a French overture. Bach transformed the technique in Wq 182 for a much different effect that thwarts expectations in a dramatic way. In Symphony VI, for example, the first movement ends on the dominant with a pause as if preparing for an authentic cadence to begin the second movement, which instead veers off in the remote key of F-sharp minor. The bold shifts in affect, the use of remote keys and elided movements are devices Bach used in his fantasias, a genre he associated with connoisseurs and private music and thought amateurs would not understand or appreciate.¹⁵ He speculated in a letter to Forkel that the audience for this type of music was small and exclusive: "Now I have been asked for 6 or 12 fantasies similar to the eighteenth *Probestück* in C minor [Wq 63/6/iii] ... but how many are there who love, understand, and play that sort of thing well?"¹⁶

What van Swieten did with the scores after receiving them from Bach is not known. He may well have arranged for their performance by one of the many amateur musical societies or private salons in Berlin whose concerts he doubtless attended. At least during his earlier years there he seems to have organized concerts held in the embassy. He was also known as a composer while in Berlin; his com-

9. Georg Poelchau, "Die handschriftlichen praktischen Wercke, Berlin den 8th Mai 1832," D-B, Mus. ms. theor. Kat. 41, p. 28.

10. *AMZ* 16 (1814), cols. 28–29.

11. "Bach componirte damals eben für den Baron van Swieten in Wien sechs grosse Orchester-Symphonien, in welchen er sich, nach Swietens Wunsch, ganz gehen liess, ohne auf die Schwierigkeiten Rücksicht zu nehmen, die daraus für die Ausübung nothwendig entstehen mussten." *Ibid.*, col. 29.

12. Peter Wollny, "Sara Levy and the Making of Musical Taste in Berlin," *MQ* 77 (1993): 659.

13. "Wenn sie auch nicht ganz deutlich wurden, so hörte man doch mit Entzücken den originellen, kühnen Gang der Ideen, und die grosse Mannigfaltigkeit und Neuheit in den Formen und Ausweichungen." *AMZ* 16 (1814), col. 29.

14. Detailed discussions of the music appear in Ottenberg, 132–39; Suchalla; and Wagner 1994.

15. See Matthew Head, "Fantasy in the Instrumental Music of C.P.E. Bach" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1995).

16. "Man will jetzt von mir 6 oder 12 Fantasien haben, wie das achtzehnte Probestück aus dem C moll ist . . . wie viele sind derer, die dergleichen lieben, verstehen und gut spielen?" Letter dated 10 February 1775, *CPEB-Letters*, 75–76; *CPEB-Briefe*, 1:485–86.

positions include at least ten symphonies.¹⁷ However, his few surviving remarks regarding performances he heard in Berlin are critical, particularly with respect to the standards of performance and quality of performers.¹⁸ Van Swieten was especially disdainful of the music and musicians at Frederick II's court. In July 1774 the King had apparently offered to make his musicians available to van Swieten, who commented: "Having then asked of me if I am likewise always busy with music and if I sometimes have concerts at my house I did not dare to tell him that the musicians are too poor but I did tell him that it is too difficult to bring together the good ones who are engaged by him."¹⁹ Given van Swieten's opinions regarding Berlin musicians, it is unclear where and by whom he intended to have these symphonies performed and why he would purposely request music likely to be difficult for the performers.

Van Swieten's motivations may have to do with the musical values he developed while in Berlin and cultivated further in Vienna, where he became an influential patron of music and developed a reputation as a "patriarch of music" whose musical tastes ran "purely for the great and noble."²⁰ He acted as arbiter of musical taste, as reported in the *Jahrbuch der Tonkunst von Wien und Prag*: "When he attends a concert our semi-connoisseurs never take their eyes off him, seeking to read in his features, not always intelligible to every one, what their opinion of the music ought to be."²¹ As such van Swieten became associated with the emerging ideology of "serious" music in late-eighteenth-century Vienna; his earlier request for difficult and sophisticated

music from C.P.E. Bach is an early expression of his "serious" musical values.²² He developed a preference for older music during his Berlin years and brought it back to Vienna where he promoted in particular the music of Handel and J.S. and C.P.E. Bach.²³ Van Swieten expressed disdain towards music he saw as excessively fashionable or frivolous and explained his philosophy in a letter published in 1799:

I belong, as far as music is concerned, to a generation that considered it necessary to study an art form thoroughly and systematically before attempting to practice it. I find in such a conviction food for the spirit and for the heart, and I return to it for strength every time I am oppressed by new evidence of decadence in the arts. My principal comforters at such times are Handel and the Bachs and those few great men of our own day who, taking these as their masters, follow resolutely in the same quest for greatness and truth.²⁴

There would have been numerous venues in Vienna where van Swieten might have arranged performances of the Wq 182 symphonies after he returned there in 1777 and was appointed prefect of the Imperial Library. However, no evidence documenting any specific performance survives. One possible venue was the Tonkünstler-Sozietät, with which van Swieten was involved, and whose program of October 1780 opened with a symphony by an unspecified Bach.²⁵ Van Swieten organized other public concerts in Vienna and attended private musical salons. He also

17. One of his symphonies was performed at least as late as 1782 in Vienna at an Augarten concert. See *NG^H*, s.v. "Swieten, Gottfried van," by Edward Olleson.

18. Olleson, "Gottfried, Baron van Swieten," 49–51.

19. "M'ayant demandé ensuite si je m'occupois aussi toujours de la musique, et si j'avois quelquefois des concerts chez moi, je n'osois pas lui dire que les musiciens étoient trop mauvais, mais je lui dis qu'il y avoit trop de difficulté à rassembler les bons qui sont occupés près de lui." Letter to Wenzel von Kaunitz, 26 July 1774. *Diplomatische Korrespondenz Preußen*, vol. 3, fasc. 56 (Neu), 1770–1777, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv Wien. Quoted in Busch, "Der österreichische Botschafter Gottfried van Swieten," 108.

20. "Sein Geschmack ist blos für das Große und Erhabene." *Jahrbuch der Tonkunst von Wien und Prag* (1796; reprint, Munich: Katzbichler, 1976), 72.

21. "Wenn er sich bei einer Akademie zugegen findet, so lassen ihn unsere Halbkenner nicht aus den Augen, um aus seinen Mienen (welche jedoch nicht jedem verständlich genug senn mögen) zu lesen, was sie etwa für ein Urtheil über das Gehörte fallen sollen." *Ibid.*; trans. in *Thayer's Life of Beethoven*, revised and ed. Elliot Forbes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 1:157.

22. See Tia DeNora, *Beethoven and the Construction of Genius: Musical Politics in Vienna, 1792–1803* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), esp. pp. 14–15 and 20–27 for her discussion of van Swieten and the role he played in the culture of "serious" music in Vienna. Olleson, "Gottfried, Baron van Swieten," 222ff., also discusses van Swieten's apparent arrogance in musical matters and his role as "musical oracle of Vienna."

23. See Olleson, "Gottfried, Baron van Swieten," 49ff., regarding his musical activities while in Berlin.

24. "Ich bin überhaupt, was Musik betrifft, in jene Zeiten zurückgetreten, wo man es noch für nöthig hielt, die Kunst, ehe man sie ausübte, ordentlich und gründlich zu lernen. Da finde ich Nahrung für Geist und Herz, und da hohle ich Stärkung, wenn irgend ein frischer Beweis von dem Verfall der Kunst mich niedergeschlagen hat. Meine Tröster sind dann vor allen Händel und die Bache, und mit ihnen auch die wenigen Meister unserer Tage, welche die Bahn jener Muster des Wahren und Grossen mit festem Fusse wandeln, und das Ziel entweder zu erreichen—versprechen, oder es schon erreicht haben." *AMZ* 1 (1799), col. 252; see Anton Schindler, *Beethoven as I Knew Him*, ed. Donald W. MacArdle, trans. Constance S. Jolly (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), 49.

25. Mary Sue Morrow, *Concert Life in Haydn's Vienna: Aspects of a Developing Musical and Social Institution* (Stuyvesant, N.Y.: Pendragon, 1989), 247.

held regular musical gatherings on Sundays in his rooms at the Imperial Library, attended by Viennese composers and musical connoisseurs, including Mozart. Whether or not the Wq 182 symphonies were performed in Vienna, the scores may have been available to Viennese composers in van Swieten's extensive music library.²⁶

Reichardt's autobiography provides the only evidence we have of a specific performance. The symphonies were evidently performed prior to their dispatch to van Swieten in Berlin, with Reichardt serving as concertmaster. This performance took place in Hamburg in 1774, with Bach in attendance, at the home of his friend, the mathematics professor Johann Georg Büsch. Büsch hosted many such private gatherings that attracted Hamburg's musicians, poets, and writers. According to Reichardt, "all that Hamburg had to offer by way of fine, educated young people, together with men and women of taste and sensitivity, used to gather in this noble and happy circle ... all travellers of any importance and education visited the Büsch household."²⁷ The symphonies were enthusiastically received and Reichardt concluded: "Hardly has ever a more noble, daring, or humorous musical work issued from the pen of a genius."²⁸ Another of Bach's Hamburg friends, the writer Matthias Claudius, wrote that the Wq 182 symphonies could be counted among Bach's best works.²⁹ Perhaps he had heard them at Büsch's house.

26. Andreas Holschneider, "Die musikalische Bibliothek Gottfried van Swietens", in *Bericht über den Internationalen Musikwissenschaftlichen Kongress Kassel 1962* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1963), 174–78.

27. "Liebe, schöne Kinder zierten den edlen Kreis des Hauses, und was Hamburg nur an schöner, gebildeter Jugend, und an Frauen und Männern von Geschmack und Gefühl hatte, versammelte sich in diesem edlen, frohen Cirkel." *AMZ* 16 (1814), col. 24; trans. in Ottenberg, 152.

28. "Im Hause des Professors Büsch wurde von Ebeling eine grosse Musik veranstaltet, um von jenen Symphonien, ehe sie abgeschickt wurden, eine vollständige Probe zu machen. Reichardt führte sie mit seiner Violine dem besorgten Componisten zu Dank an. Wenn sie auch nicht ganz deutlich wurden, so hörte man doch mit Entzücken den originellen, kühnen Gang der Ideen, und die grosse Mannigfaltigkeit und Neuheit in den Formen und Ausweichungen. Schwerlich ist je eine musikalische Composition von höherm, keckerem, humoristischem Charakter einer genialen Seele entströmt." *AMZ* 16 (1814), col. 29.

29. "Er hat auch 6 Kammer-Symphonien gemacht, die für eine seiner besten Arbeiten gelten können." Undated letter, evidently written in November or December 1774, to Heinrich Wilhelm von Gerstenberg, *CPEB-Briefe*, 1:463.

Dissemination and Sources

In general, Bach's symphonies were not as widely distributed in the eighteenth century as his works in some other genres; only five (Wq 177 and the set of four, Wq 183) were published during his lifetime. However, there must have been some public awareness and interest in the Wq 182 symphonies as evidenced by their inclusion in music dealers' catalogues. J. C. Westphal first offered them in his 1777 catalogue; they appeared in a section at the end headed "Annoch sind angekommen," suggesting that they had just become available to him.³⁰ He continued to advertise them in his subsequent catalogues. Johann Traeg in Vienna carried them as well and they appeared in his 1799 catalogue.³¹ Whatever the extent of their early dissemination they appear not to have remained in circulation, as they were not known in the later nineteenth century. By the time Carl Hermann Bitter wrote his biography of W.F. and C.P.E. Bach in 1868, he commented that the van Swieten symphonies were not known and wondered what had become of them.³²

The circumstances of van Swieten's commission must have played a significant role in the dissemination and reception of the symphonies. If he held exclusive rights he may have controlled their limited circulation. Several details suggest this may have been the case. Reichardt warned of the loss to art if they were to remain buried in a private collection.³³ Reading between the lines one could extrapolate that an agreement arranged for van Swieten to be the sole possessor of them and that they would remain in his private library for him to do with as he saw fit, though it is reasonable to assume that Bach was allowed to retain a copy for his private use. That music dealers offered manuscript copies of the symphonies was apparently against Bach's wishes. For example, he seems to have gotten angry with J. C. Westphal, a dealer with whom he had an otherwise good business relationship, for offering the symphonies for sale in his catalogue. In a letter of 29 May 1789 to J.J.H. Westphal, the Hamburg Westphal explained that Bach had wanted to know how he had acquired cop-

30. *Verzeichnis von musicalen welche in der Niederlage bey Johann Christoph Westphal und Compagnie in Hamburg in Commission zu haben sind* (Hamburg, 1777) (copy in B-Br, Fétis 5205), 150.

31. Cat. Traeg, 60, under "Quartetti à 2 Violini, Viola, è Violoncello," no. 258, "[Bach, C.P.E.] 6. Quartett Sinfon[ien]."

32. Carl Hermann Bitter, *Carl Philipp Emanuel und Wilhelm Friedemann Bach und deren Brüder* (Berlin: W. Müller, 1868), 242–43.

33. *AMZ* 16 (1814), col. 29.

ies since Bach had written the symphonies exclusively for van Swieten.³⁴ Westphal concluded that this situation was “all the better for them” (*Desto lieber waren sie uns*), perhaps because he was one of the few dealers to gain access to these works and to be able to make money from them. Copies of these symphonies made by the Hamburg copyist Ludwig August Christoph Hopff, who worked on occasion both for Westphal and for Bach, bear Westphal’s cipher and may well have been Westphal’s archival copies (sources D 2–D 7). Finally, it is curious that Bach included the Wq 182 symphonies with his “printed works” in his 1773 list of compositions even though they were not published in his lifetime. At the time Bach compiled the list he may have expected that they would be printed.

The Wq 182 symphonies remained little known and unpublished until the late nineteenth century when Hugo Riemann discovered copies (now lost) of nos. 1 and 4 in the library of the Thomasschule in Leipzig (source [D 17]). He apparently misinterpreted this discovery, however, because he published them in 1897 as string quartets, presumably because his sources lacked bass figures. His error was only corrected in the 1930s when Ernst Fritz Schmid discovered the autograph scores of Symphonies II–V in the library of the Conservatoire Royal de Musique in Brussels (sources A 2–A 5) and subsequently published scores of Symphonies II, III, and V (Hannover: Nagel, 1933). Peters published the first complete edition of all six in 1975–76, edited by Traugott Fedtke.

This edition is based on the autograph scores of Symphonies II–V in Brussels and that of Symphony VI in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris (source A 6), which are probably the dedication exemplars prepared for van Swieten. Performing parts from Bach’s estate for all six symphonies survive in Berlin (sources B 1–B 6). The autograph of Symphony I is lost, so the edition is based on the performing parts. A number of secondary sources were consulted but not used to establish the musical text of this edition, including the set of parts from Westphal’s shop mentioned above and the Sing-Akademie sources dis-

cussed below. Finally, there is a score in Brussels (source D 1), copied in 1899–1900 from an original set of parts, now lost, that may have been from J.J.H. Westphal’s collection (source [D 18]).

Though the Wq 182 symphonies were not widely known they continued to circulate in manuscript after Bach’s death. They were evidently performed later in the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century in Berlin, as several copies of scores and parts are in the collection of the Sing-Akademie zu Berlin (sources D 8–D 16). One set of parts belonged to Johann August Patzig, a music teacher, who for many years invited students and friends to his home, Carl Friedrich Zelter among them, to practice orchestral and chamber music.³⁵ While Zelter was at the Sing-Akademie he acquired Patzig’s library and convened similar gatherings with his Ripienschule. He revered the music of C.P.E. Bach and performed his symphonies, among other works, adding wind parts to the string symphonies in order to adapt them to the orchestra’s forces.³⁶ Among the students to perform in the Ripienschule orchestra was the young Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, who was studying composition with Zelter. He certainly would have encountered the Wq 182 symphonies and was likely influenced by them in the composition of his string symphonies of 1821–23 written under Zelter’s tutelage.

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34. “Er sie nur allein für Durchl. v. Swieten gemacht hätte.” *CPEB-Briefe* 2:1304.

35. *Carl Friedrich Zelters Darstellungen seines Lebens*, ed. Johann-Wolfgang Schottländer (1932; reprint, Hildesheim: Olms, 1968), 211–14.

36. Hans-Günter Ottenberg, “C.P.E. Bach and Carl Friedrich Zelter,” *CPEB-Studies*, 199–200.