

INTRODUCTION

Many of the surviving autograph manuscripts of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's keyboard concertos combine significant portions in fair copy with segments of intense compositional activity. In this respect, they tell us something about Bach's compositional process. Nearly all of them also contain numerous corrections of detail which were entered subsequent to the initial compositional impulse. A good example of this type of manuscript is the autograph score for the Concerto in E Minor, Wq 15. The work was written in 1745, most likely in the very early part of the year. The manuscript is undated, but the autograph manuscript of the third concerto Bach wrote in that year (Wq 17) is dated explicitly "Fine. d. 5 Apr. 1745," suggesting that these three works (Wq 15, 16, and 17) were composed in little more than three months.¹ In all likelihood, Bach had been working on one or more of them already in the later part of 1744.

There are a number of other reasons that make the autograph manuscript of Wq 15 of unusual interest. Numerous corrections involve details that appear to belong to different layers and show that Bach returned to the work and updated it on several occasions. Also, for a manuscript showing strong evidence of compositional activity, there are very few places where measures have been crossed out and only one place where an important erasure suggests a change in compositional direction.

In its final corrected form, the autograph presents the "Fassung letzter Hand," albeit without bass figures. Beneath these corrections, there is evidence of an earlier variant of the accompaniment which is preserved in many of the secondary sources. Some of those sources contain an alternate and seemingly earlier version of the keyboard part, of which there is no trace in the autograph score. (For a discussion of the probable history of the work, see CPEB: CW, III/9.5, introduction, pp. xii–xiii, and critical report, pp. 148–54 and 183.) The autograph score presents the middle and late versions of the work; there is no trace of

any autograph entries for the earliest version. It is therefore unclear what sort of materials Bach worked from when he prepared the autograph score—sketches, an earlier score, or both—and even precisely what form the earliest version of the work took. The character of the variant segments in the keyboard part allows for the possibility that the earliest sketches of the work may have been conceived with a melody instrument in mind, quite possibly the transverse flute, but Bach seems to have abandoned this idea quite early on.

Today, the manuscript forms part of a composite manuscript containing the autograph scores for twelve of C.P.E. Bach's keyboard concertos located in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz mit Mendelssohn Archiv, Musikabteilung, Mus. ms. Bach P 352. The volume belonged to Georg Poelchau, an important collector of musical manuscripts in the early nineteenth century and, for a time, the librarian at the Sing-Akademie zu Berlin. After Poelchau's death in 1836, his collection passed to his heirs, from whom it was acquired five years later by the Prussian Royal Library. All twelve manuscripts were still in C.P.E. Bach's personal library at the time of his death in 1788 and remained with his family until 1805 when they were sold at auction in Hamburg.²

The autograph of Wq 15 is the seventh fascicle in P 352. It consists of seven bifolios and a single folio sheet, a total of thirty pages. From the organization of the staff ruling, it seems very likely that Bach had a fully worked-out model in front of him from which he was copying. The first thing that is immediately obvious when looking at the manuscript is that a large part of it, including substantial portions of the solo sections in the outer movements as well as the entire slow movement, is compactly written in a relatively neat hand. These sections appear to be fair copies. Within these pages, there is ample evidence of corrections and changes in detail. Most of these alterations

1. Four of Bach's concertos are dated Berlin, 1745 in NV 1790, p. 29: Wq 15, 16, 17, and 18; autograph scores of three of these—Wq 15, 17, and 18—are found in the composite manuscript D-B, Mus. ms. Bach P 352, fascicles VII, VIII, and IX.

2. Elias N. Kulukundis, "Die Versteigerung von C.P.E. Bachs musikalischem Nachlass im Jahre 1805," *Bach-Jahrbuch* (1995): 14–5–76. The purchaser was Caspar Siegfried Gähler, Burgomeister of Altona and a pupil of Bach. Gähler then sold or gave them to Poelchau in 1818. A letter from Gähler to Poelchau accompanies the manuscript.

are written with a different quill and darker ink and were added subsequent to the initial setting down of the work. Sometimes there are differences in Bach's writing on a page that is otherwise an uncorrected fair copy. An example of this occurs on page 4 (all page references are to the present facsimile edition), where the keyboard right-hand part in the first system is darker than the left-hand part and the accompanying string parts; similarly, the violin and bass parts in the second system on the same page are darker than the viola part. Clearly Bach entered the darker notes first and the lighter notes subsequently, so as not to interrupt the stream of his thought processes with the insertion of secondary details which were clear either in his head or in the source from which he may have been copying. Differences in the quill, the ink, and the handwriting are less apparent in the third movement. Notwithstanding, at the beginning of the G-major ritornello on the bottom system of page 17, the violin I part, this time in lighter ink, appears to have been entered before the viola and bass parts.

Scattered among the pages in fair copy are pages that appear to be freely composed. This is certainly true for the important segments of the keyboard part where the figuration becomes quite complex and at times almost fantasia-like. The first such place appears on page 2 with the initial entry of the keyboard. The measures are suddenly wider and the notes less closely squeezed together than in the segments in fair copy. Bach forgot a measure which he subsequently inserted in the unused violin II and viola staves—probably almost contemporaneously with setting down the rest of the passage, as there are no substantial differences in the handwriting. (Bach later deleted this extra measure in the context of one of his revisions.) Once the strings enter in accompaniment with motives derived from the main ritornello theme (at the bottom of page 2 and in the top system of page 3), Bach appears to have entered the violin I and bass parts first, as if copying from an existing model, drawing barlines that did not leave enough room for the desired keyboard figurations.

There are two additional places in the first movement where compositional activity follows passages in seeming fair copy. Both involve recurrences of the initial solo theme: in the dominant minor following the third ritornello on pages 7–8; and in the tonic following the brief fourth ritornello on pages 11–12. In both cases, Bach initially allowed ample space for the keyboard figurations. Once the accompaniment joins in, the keyboard figurations are squeezed into less than adequate space, suggesting that he entered the string parts and drew the barlines before composing the keyboard part.

In the third movement, there is less evidence of direct compositional activity. The keyboard figurations on page 20 (mm. 83–102) are probably newly composed; they differ significantly from the same passage in the earliest version of the work. Bach probably copied the violin parts from the earlier source, and perhaps the viola and bass parts as well. He then squeezed the newly composed keyboard part into the available space. Originally each measure in the instrumental bass was a half note, but Bach almost immediately altered that to repeated 8th notes: when the passage recurs, almost exactly, on page 28 (mm. 359–77), the instrumental bass was expressly written as repeated 8th notes. The keyboard part in that passage may also have been freely composed, though Bach more likely simply copied it from measures 83–102. The one section of the third movement that appears to be freely written (see pages 24–25) was almost certainly copied from a pre-existing source; the material is present in all the secondary sources for the work.

One important erasure in the manuscript appears in the keyboard part in the last system on page 27 (movement iii, mm. 349–54). As far as can be made out, Bach planned for the keyboard part to proceed quite differently, as a lead-in for the section of passagework commencing in measure 359. After writing most of five measures, he seems to have changed his mind, erased those measures, and replaced them with the passage, unchanged, from the earliest version. This passage, brief though it is, presents an entirely new keyboard pattern not previously encountered in the movement. Introducing new material at this point in the movement is unusual for Bach. In the early version, however, this pattern has greater relevance: it is closely related to the figural pattern in measures 81–102, and prefigures the repetition of that passage in measures 359–77. Three other instances of corrections in the third movement are worth pointing out. In measures 103–4 at the end of the bottom system on page 20, the barlines appear at different places in the various parts. This is almost certainly a copying error; so is the deleted measure near the end of the last system on page 28. On the other hand, the measure crossed out in the middle system of page 22, following measure 160, was more likely a compositional decision reflecting a change of direction. (Further details of Bach's numerous compositional changes and corrections are found in the commentary to CPEB: CW, III/9.5.)

The absence of any trace of the earliest form of the keyboard part as preserved in some of the secondary sources suggests that P 352 was not Bach's original "composing" score, but was a fair copy used to update the concerto and replace earlier drafts. Even though it preserves a revised

version of Wq 15, it remains an interesting example of the workings of Bach's mind as he created a concerto to show off his talents, both as a composer and as a performer; it is also an example of his constant desire to improve on what he had written earlier.

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