

INTRODUCTION

The first attempts of a young musician at independent composition are among the most interesting aspects of his evolution and are fundamental to the understanding of his historical context and stylistic development. An examination of the factors leading to the growth of a personal style are especially meaningful when dealing with representatives of an epoch that judged music first and foremost by its degree of originality. The sons of Johann Sebastian Bach, especially the two eldest, have long been regarded as original geniuses, for their compositions appear to have had no recognizable models. The early creative phase of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach continues to elude the grasp of historians. The mature composer himself desired either to transmit to posterity his earliest compositions in fundamentally reworked form (he used the term *Erneuern* for this process of revision or renewal), or else to destroy his “too youthful” works written in the 1730s in Leipzig. Bach mentioned his attempt to discard these pieces in his catalogue of keyboard works from 1772 (noting that he had “destroyed all works before the year 1733, because they were too youthful”) and in a letter to the Braunschweig scholar Johann Joachim Eschenburg of 21 January 1786 (in which he reported burning “a ream and more of old works”). Thus did the mature C. P. E. Bach exercise his strictest standards of quality on his earlier work, and sought to define the basis for the judgment to be passed on him by posterity.

It is regrettable that nearly all of Bach’s early vocal music is now lost, including the many festive cantatas that Bach is thought to have composed during his student years at the Viadrina (the university in Frankfurt an der Oder) as leader of the *collegium musicum*. There was no trace of any vocal works from the Leipzig years until the fortunate discovery by the present editor in the fall of 2009 of the autograph composing score of an unknown church cantata by the young C. P. E. Bach, which was identified among anonymous music manuscripts in the parish archive of St. Johannis in Mügeln (Saxony). The work is a three-movement solo cantata for bass, strings, and basso continuo with the text incipit “Ich bin vergnügt mit meinem Stande,” and was intended for Septuagesima Sunday. The work is presented here in facsimile and in transcription, with further commentary available in CPEB: CW, V/5.2.

The autograph comprises two nested bifolios; the page dimensions are approximately 34 by 21 centimeters; it is written on paper that has a watermark (the letter combination “M A”) consistent with J. S. Bach’s Leipzig autographs which can be dated to the period between July 1732 and February 1735. The date of origin of the cantata can be delimited further by the characteristic handwriting of C. P. E. Bach and by external data (Septuagesima being the ninth Sunday before Easter; autumn of 1734 when Bach moved to Frankfurt an der Oder). Bach’s treble and bass clefs, as well as the forms of the 8th and 16th rests, point to the period around 1733/34. Particularly striking is the similarity to the keyboard part, also in C. P. E. Bach’s hand, in the original performance material for J. S. Bach’s *Schweigt stille, plaudert nicht* (the “Coffee Cantata”), BWV 211, which can be dated to 1734. As a date of first performance either 1 February 1733 or 21 February 1734 might be considered. How and when the autograph came to the small town of Mügeln, about 37 miles (60 kilometers) east of Leipzig, is still unclear.

The text of this cantata comes from the renowned collection *Cantaten auf die Sonn- und Fest-Tage durch das ganze Jahr* by the Leipzig occasional poet Christian Friedrich Henrici (alias Picander), published in four installments in 1728 and 1729. The only extant exemplar lacks the title page. A new edition of the collection was published in 1732 under the title *Picanders Ernst-Schertzhafte und Satyrische Gedichte*, vol. 3. (Both editions of the libretto are published here in facsimile, with a transcription and translation of the texts set by Bach.) Although Picander’s text contains five movements, C. P. E. Bach set only the first three. The three-movement form of two arias connected by a recitative—first popular in secular cantatas—corresponds to a model that was commonly encountered in church music at least since Georg Philipp Telemann’s *Harmonischer Gottes-Dienst* (Hamburg, 1725–26) and was preferred for solo cantatas. From the layout of the autograph it is clear that the decision to omit the second recitative and the concluding chorale came—at the latest—when the second leaf of the second bifolio was folded over to the front (thereby resulting in two nested bifolios) to become the title page. At present it is not known whether this

truncation had artistic or practical grounds. It is possible that a concluding chorale—and perhaps a vocal or instrumental introductory movement—was added only in the now-lost performance parts. C.P.E. Bach’s original plan to include an obbligato cello, as indicated by the caption title (“Dominica Septuages. a 2 Viol. Viola Basso solo e Violoncello oblig. con Continuo”), was discarded perhaps in the midst of or even prior to his writing the music. Possibly the naming of the obbligato cello in the caption title can be taken to indicate a planned complete setting of Picander’s text. Since in both arias an additional bass part would not have been a good idea for reasons of sonority alone, the cello might have been assigned an obbligato part in the second recitative. In that movement, the promise of heavenly life might have suggested a setting in the manner of the second movement of J.S. Bach’s cantata *Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen*, BWV 56.

The score of the cantata *Ich bin vergnügt mit meinem Stande*—which is, apart from the entries in the *Notebook for Anna Magdalena Bach*, the first identifiable composing autograph of C.P.E. Bach—shows impressively with what care the young composer labored at the technical working-out of his composition. Careful scrutiny of the first measures of the opening aria reveals several distinct stages that the ritornello theme went through before its final formulation. Analysis of these stages shows the gradual approach toward the ideal of a flexible and sonorous four-part texture governing the homophonic setting, whereby the middle voices are not neglected. The almost manic corrections and revisions reveal the high artistic standards of the twenty-year-old composer. The Leipzig cantata gives us further insight into C.P.E. Bach’s working methods—the constant tinkering with his own works, the small- and large-scale revisions, and the renewing (*Erneuern*) of selected early works. Fortunately, this work escaped the destruction of the remaining youthful works.

In terms of style the cantata *Ich bin vergnügt mit meinem Stande* is a work on the brink of new departures; its Janus-faced nature owes a debt to the compositions of J.S. Bach from the late 1720s and early 1730s, such as the arias in the great cantatas in homage to members of the princely houses or the *galant* movements from the partitas from the first part of the *Clavier-Übung*, but already shows elements of the *empfindsam* style that C.P.E. Bach was to make his own in the following years. The work that makes its appearance only now, after nearly 280 years, is a welcome document both for the compositional skill of the barely twenty-year-old C.P.E. Bach and for the repertoire of music in the Leipzig main churches in the early 1730s.

Three tenor arias, Wq 211, completed in his youthful years (“in jungen Jahren verfertigt”) have survived (published in CPEB: CW, VI/4), but it is not known when or for what occasion(s) these pieces were written. A fragment of an aria for soprano, “Reißt euch los, bekränkte Sinnen,” once attributed to J.S. Bach (BWV 224), also survives in C.P.E. Bach’s hand (published in facsimile and a transcription with commentary in appendix A of CPEB: CW, V/5.2). The fragment consists of seventy-one measures of the soprano part. Since it survives on the back side of a sheet of the so-called Pedal Exercitium, BWV 598 (see the facsimile and a transcription in CPEB: CW, I/9), it is likely that this was a student work from Leipzig, probably a sacred or secular cantata. That the fragment survives in the form of a partbook suggests that the piece was indeed completed, if not performed, but we have no further information about its text or purpose.

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