

Bach Beat

The Newsletter of the Bach Cantata Choir



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www.bachcantatachoir.org

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Newsletter

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C.P.E. Bach: One Foot in the Old World, One in the New

By Lorin Wilkerson

Being the eldest surviving son of a man who came to define an entire era of music can't be an easy thing. However, if one is possessed of genius in his own right, it becomes a much different proposition...

Of course, at the time no one knew that J.S. Bach would come to be considered the apotheosis of the baroque era; he was well-known and respected in his own way, but certainly nothing then hinted that he would eventually come to be considered the greatest composer of his era and one of the greatest of all time. But, during his lifetime, he was certainly not the most famous.

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach was born in 1714, and would begin to come into his own when musical styles were undergoing a sea-change in Europe. Named for his godfather Georg Philipp Telemann, Emanuel the precocious and brilliant musician would take all of the voluminous knowledge imparted to him by his father, who represented the passing age, and turn

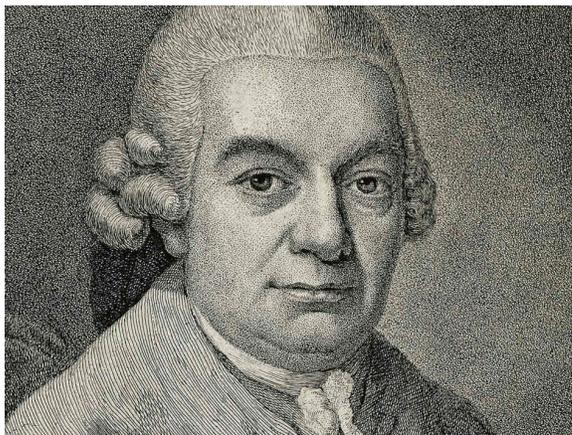
his skills toward the *stil galante*, the less dense, more rapidly emotive and harmonically straightforward style that was coming into vogue.

Emanuel had studied with his father at the Thomasschule and as well was instructed by him privately, so needless to say he was well-grounded to pursue a career in music. He received his degree in law, which he probably did so that he might be thought of as more of a professional and less a servant than musicians were wont to be treated by employers in that day and age. With a recommendation from Sylvius Leopold Weiss (perhaps the greatest lutenist the world has ever seen)

he secured employment with Frederick the Great of Prussia.

He spent 30 years with the German emperor, and in that time composed many concerti and sonatas for flute, as the monarch was an accomplished amateur flutist. He also composed volumes

of keyboard works as well as the definitive work on keyboard playing of the 18th century: *An Essay on the True Art of playing Keyboard Instruments*. This became the standard upon which many of the great keyboard artists of that era based their playing. He also composed in many other genres: song, sacred and secular choral works¹ including



Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714 – 1788)

cantatas and oratorios, and he influenced many of the greatest artist of the generation to follow him, including Mozart, Clementi and Beethoven.

Stylistically he was very forward-thinking; his propagation of the *empfindsamer stil* (or ‘sensitive style’) which employed radical and sudden shifts in emotion and color (especially in his keyboard sonatas) could be seen as a forerunner of the *sturm und drang* of the later generations, and in some ways was very personal and broke from the more harmonic simplicity of other composers in his day. Indeed the use of strong emotive elements would be a hallmark of the Romantic period a century after his death. Yet in his essay on the keyboard, he promulgated a contrapuntal outworking for figured bass reading that was surely grounded in the training he received from his father. When he died in 1788, it was as the most internationally famous of all the great musicians in the long family tree of musical Bachs.

¹ The BCC will perform *Bitten* from *Zwei Motetten*, Wq 108, at the Sunday, May 4th concert.

Biographical information adapted from Wikipedia and *J.S. Bach* by Albert Schweitzer.

Cake Walk After the Concert!

It was such a success last year, we’re doing it again! We hope you will stay following our May 4th concert to join the Cake Walk. (Think raffle combined with musical chairs with the prizes being delicious cakes.)

For just a \$5 donation (note: larger donations will not be refused), you may take a turn for a chance take home one of about a dozen donated cakes. We hope that you can join us!

Fare thee well, BachBeat; I hardly knew ye

By Lorin Wilkerson

After years of singing bass and serving on the BCC board (from both of which I retired last year), it is with some bitter-sweetness that I bid fond farewell to writing the *BachBeat* in this its 29th issue. (As a sidenote for those who don’t know, all previous issues of *BachBeat* are available on the BCC website—www.bachcantatachoir.org) It’s been a terrific learning experience for me; lots of research, reading, cogitating and pencil-chewing over the years, and the long and the short of all the different ways that I have been connected with the BCC is that I feel so much more educated about, and deeply connected to, this early music that we all love so much.

I’ve gotten to collaborate with numerous terrifically knowledgeable and talented writers and musicians over the years, including Katherine LeFever, Mark Woodward,¹ Doro Gauer Lail, Hideki Yamaya and our own Ralph Nelson, and hopefully you’ll be hearing more from some of these folks (and from me) in future issues of *BachBeat*. None of this would have been possible without the expert skills of my dear wife Kristin Sterling, who has done most of the hard stuff since this project started. I’ve gotten a number of compliments (as well as some criticism and complaints) over the years and for all of it I sincerely thank everyone. Au revoir.

¹ See *BachBeat* Vol.2, No.3 for Mark’s article on Hans Leo Hassler. The BCC is performing Hassler’s *Missa Secunda* at the May 4th concert. (http://www.bachcantatachoir.org/uploads/2/4/0/8/2408892/vol2-3_newsletter.pdf)

Rose City Park Presbyterian Church
Sunday, May 4, 2014 at 2:00 p.m.

J.S. Bach: Cantata #39
“Brich dem Hungrigen dein Brot”
Hans Leo Hassler: *Missa Secunda*
G.F. Handel: Organ Concerto #13
“Cuckoo and the Nightingale”
C.P.E. Bach: “Bitten”

Spring Concert!

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