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The Music of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach
Supplement 10.8. Variations and Arrangements

Bach's arrangement of the F-sharp-minor Fantasia, although unique in its scoring, was only one of many adaptations of keyboard pieces that he had been making since at least the 1750s and which continued through his Hamburg period. These were probably written for special occasions or on commission, as were also a few variation sets. Although of limited musical interest, such things must have taken up a significant amount of Bach's time and creative energy. Scores for arrangements might have been prepared largely by copyists, following Bach's instructions, as in some of the Berlin concertos with alternate solo parts. Even these, however, would have required the composer's planning and proofreading, and the addition of even a single subsidiary accompanying part could have forced the rethinking of notational as well as musical aspects of the original score, as in the case of *C. P. E. Bachs Empfindungen* (W. 80).

Three sets of keyboard variations prepared in Bach's later years at Hamburg are loosely related to the rondos composed during the same period, inasmuch as the latter frequently apply variation technique to the restatements of their themes. The Variations with Varied Reprises (W. 118/10) must have followed the composition of the C-Major Keyboard Trio W. 91/4, composed and published in 1777. The theme for the two works was originally the little Andantino W. 116/23, the first of the six little pieces of 1775 that provided material for several other works as well (see table below). Better known today are Bach's variations on "La Folia [sic] d'Espagne" (W. 118/9), which, however, appear to have been obscure during Bach's lifetime, although they were published posthumously by Traeg of Vienna.¹ Why Bach in 1778 composed a dozen variations on a famous but outmoded Baroque ostinato is unknown. We can imagine, however, that he was sometimes requested to improvise variations on favorite tunes. A melody and ostinato bass line that had been the basis of a famous sonata by Corelli, whose works were still studied in the late eighteenth century, is likely to have come up on occasion. Bach must have known Corelli's work (op. 5, no. 12), and although it was by no means the only set of variations on the Follia, by 1778 it was probably the only well-known one. Bach seems to allude to Corelli's variations in several of his own, including nos. 1 and 7 (online example 10.35).

Corelli's opus 5 sonatas, of which the Follia variations constitute the twelfth and last, are usually described as being for solo violin and continuo. An argument has been made, however, for regarding them as duo sonatas for violin and bass,² and many of Bach's variations are conceived polyphonically, in two real parts. On the other hand, the fundamentally harmonic basis of Bach's variations is clear from the "theme" as he gives it: a simple two-part skeleton doubtless intended to be realized with full chords (online example 10.36). Although the set, like most of Bach's

¹ In 1803; the publication is listed as W. 270. Traeg also published Bach's early Locatelli Variations (W. 118/7). The Follia Variations otherwise survive only in copies by Michel and Westphal.

² The point, first made by Niels Martin Jensen and developed by Allsop, *The Italian "Trio" Sonata*, is reviewed and qualified in Walls, "On Divided Lines."

variations, describes no clear overall arc, Bach, probably deliberately, mixes variations in a fairly archaic, perhaps Corellian, style, with others that are more clearly his own. Even if the set fails to add up to a convincing musical whole, it might be heard in the context of Bach's Hamburg concerts that deliberately programmed old and outmoded works like his father's alongside contemporary ones.³

[Example 10.35. Variations on La Follia, W. 118/9, opening of: \(a\) variation 1, \(b\) variation 7; Corelli, Sonata in D Minor, op. 5, no. 12, opening of: \(a\) variation 17, \(b\) variation 10](#)

(a) **Geschwind**

(b)

(c) **Allegro vn.**
b.c.

(d) **Vivace**

[Example 10.36. Variations on La Follia, W. 118/9, theme, mm. 1–8 \(editorial additions in small notes\)](#)

³ These concerts might have been organized in emulation of London's Concert of Ancient Music, praised by Burney; see my “C. P. E. Bach and Handel,” 15.

Table. Versions and arrangements of several late keyboard pieces

<u>original (kb)</u>	<u>W. 115</u>	<u>W. 92</u>	<u>W. 184</u>	<u>other</u>	<u>comment</u>	
	<u>(2 kb)</u>	<u>(kb, cl, bn)</u>	<u>(2 fl, 2cl,</u>			
			<u>2 hn, bn)</u>			
<i>W.</i>	<i>key</i>	<i>no.</i>	<i>key</i>	<i>no.</i>	<i>key</i>	
		<i>no.</i>	<i>key</i>	<i>no.</i>	<i>key</i>	
65/50/1	G	2	Eb	5	A	sonata movement (rondo, <i>Lebhaft</i>)
65/50/2	C	5	Eb	2	F	sonata movement (<i>Andante</i>)
116/23	C				91/4 C	Andantino; version with varied reprises: W. 118/10
116/24	F 2 F				186/2 F	Andante
116/25	D 1 Bb 6 Bb					Allegro, some passages also in W. 116/53; for clock as W. 193/2
116/26	G					Allegro; earlier (?) kb version: H. 256
116/27	g					Andante (no arrangements?)
116/28	D 4 Eb 3 Eb				185/1 D	Allegro; later (?) kb version: H. 255; theme recurs in the Resurrection Cantata, no. 11 (mm. 74–5)
116/32	a					minuet; later (?) kb version: H. 258 (autograph in P 748)
116/50	a 3 a				186/1 a	Langsam und traurig; for clock as W. 193/28 (g)
116/52	Eb			4	Eb	Allegro ma non troppo
116/53	C				185/2 C	Allegro; some passages also in W. 116/25
116/57	C			6	C	Allegretto grazioso (rondo)
—		1	Eb	1	D	Allegretto (no kb version)
—		4	Bb	3	G	Allegro (no kb version); for clock as W. 193/2 (D)

kb = keyboard fl = flute cl = clarinet hn = horn bn = bassoon

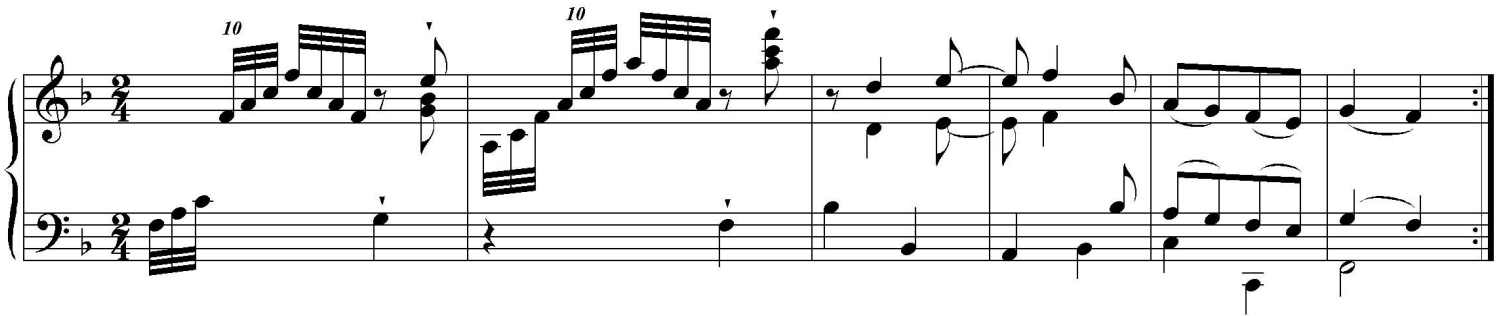
W. 91/4 = Keyboard Trio in C

W. 185 = Six Marches for winds (2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 horns, bassoon)

W. 186 = Two Pieces for winds (2 clarinets, 2 horns, bassoon)

Individual variations within the Follia set tend to be homogeneous in style, avoiding the dramatic shifts of pacing and other idiosyncracies that had become customary in Bach's keyboard writing by this date. Bach's only other late set of variations for solo keyboard, although shorter and demanding less of the player, is more recognizably a product of these years. Based on a canzonetta by Charlotte of Saxe-Meiningen, the reigning duchess of Gotha, W. 118/8 uses a theme that was also the subject of a pastiche set of variations published there in 1781 to which Georg Benda and other local composers contributed.⁴ Bach's six variations alone, however, constitute a complete composition with a coherent plan: they gradually gain in complexity and speed, and after the *minore* variation 4 comes a little fantasia in the guise of variation 5, interpolating passages in A minor into the original, which is in F. The final variation alternates between grand arpeggios and a quiet syncopated line in octaves on which the set ends—giving the variations an unpretentious conclusion typical of Bach's late works (online example 10.37).

[Example 10.37. Variations on a Canzonetta, W. 118/8, last six measures](#)



The special treatment of the penultimate variation in the Gotha set shows Bach's willingness late in life to give new thought to a genre that had previously been of little interest to him. He had already shown similar imagination in the variations for keyboard trio—the basis of the Variations with Varied Reprises—where the penultimate section modulates from C to the mediant (E). Three years later, as part of his 1780 oratorio for the Hamburg militia (H. 822a), Bach wrote what is in effect a series of chorale variations.⁵ In 1781, the year of the Gotha variations, Bach also

⁴ Not seen here, the print is mentioned by Helm (entry 275), but it does not include W. 118/8 (see CPEBCW 1/7:xxii). Helm's identification of the duchess as Luise Dorothea (whom Bach probably met during his visit in 1754) is based on a faulty supposition by Miesner, "Graf v. Keyserlingk und Minister v. Happe," 111–12, who evidently did not know the composition by her successor and niece. The latter's subsequent works included a symphony and twelve lieder, according to Klemm, *Die Frauen*, 5:147.

⁵ This series of chorale settings, which involves variously scored stanzas using the melody "Lobt Gott, ihr Christen allegleich," was further varied in the *Dank-Hymne der Freundschaft* (H. 824e) of 1785. There the successive variations alternate with what is in effect a separate series of variations setting the six stanzas of Psalm 150. The same work ends with nine varied settings of a

composed the A-major Arioso With Variations for keyboard and violin (W. 79), which again goes to a third-related key (F) for the penultimate variation.⁶ As in the keyboard trio, the relatively remote key is prepared by a short modulating bridge, and the work as a whole ends with a quiet little coda. In both cases it is the new tonality that is the point of the penultimate variation, for the original melody is otherwise almost unaltered. The effect is the same as in Bach's contemporaneous modulating rondos, where a transposition of the main theme to a remote tonality is often a climactic step into another world.

At Hamburg Bach also arranged many of his smaller compositions for instrumental ensembles of various types. Like the parodies and pastiches of vocal music created for church services during the same period, these are of varying musical interest. Most appear to have originated as little keyboard pieces, but unlike those written at Berlin none bear programmatic titles. A few are dances, but most are designated simply by their tempo marks, and most are binary forms rather than rondos. Most of Bach's Berlin arrangements occur among the movements of the ensemble sonatas, which Bach presumably played during concerts that he directed as keyboard soloist. His Hamburg arrangements are mostly for mixed ensembles that must have served more varied purposes. Four pieces arranged for keyboard duo (W. 115), as well as six one-movement sonatas for keyboard with clarinet and bassoon (W. 92), must have been for domestic use. Most of the other Hamburg arrangements were probably used in more public settings, perhaps during civic functions such as the festive gatherings of the officers of the Hamburg militia, for which Bach also composed two oratorio-serenata pairs. In addition, Bach adapted a number of pieces for clocks and other mechanical instruments. Although the actual mechanisms, which might have provided information about tempo and other aspects of performance practice, do not survive, the scores of some thirty of these adaptations are extant (W. 193), mostly in Michel's copies.

The wind scoring of many of Bach's arrangements recalls the *Harmoniemusik* that was simultaneously fashionable elsewhere in Europe. As in other genres, however, Bach was probably as strongly influenced by French and even English practices as by Austrian and south-German music. The varying instrumentation from one set to the next suggests that Hamburg did not yet know any standard "Harmonie" ensemble, such as that established by Emperor Joseph at Vienna in 1782, although the reliance on arrangements rather than original compositions is a common feature.

Identifying the precise history of these and other arrangements will keep editors busy for some time; the nature of the problem emerges from the complex of related pieces and their arrangements listed in the table below. In general, NV provides dates of composition only for the original versions of these pieces, and, as Bach's own scores and parts survive for only a handful of

strophic aria or song.

⁶Ulrich Leisinger argues convincingly that the Arioso was originally conceived for solo keyboard (CPEBCW 1/7:xxi), but his edition overlooks a few early readings (reported in CPEBCW 2/3.1:18) that Bach apparently changed when he added the violin part. In particular, in the coda (mm. 102–3), the left-hand chords were originally on the fourth beat, now filled in by figuration in the violin.

them, their precise history may never be known.⁷ The core of this particular group of pieces, shown in bold in the table, is unusual for its survival in Bach's partial autograph score, which includes the Six Little Pieces of 1775 (W. 116/23–28).⁸ Four of these turn up as movements in the keyboard duos W. 115, the keyboard trios W. 92, or other sets of arrangements, which in turn incorporate additional movements taken from other sources.

The Six Little Pieces of 1775 are the same group from which Bach took the theme of the variations in C for keyboard trio (later the Variations with Varied Reprises). As the table shows, Bach incorporated three other pieces from this set into the Duetti for two keyboards (W. 118). He also included two of these three in a group of six one-movement Sonatas for keyboard with clarinet and bassoon (W. 92). These keyboard trios overlap, in turn, with a different set of six one-movement Sonatas for wind ensemble (W. 184). There are also further arrangements of the original little pieces for variously constituted wind ensembles and for musical clock. In general, the versions for keyboard trio are somewhat simpler and, therefore, probably somewhat earlier than those for two keyboards; the versions for wind band were probably made independently of the others. Not all the pieces in each set were necessarily arrangements; a few may have been original compositions, as with two of the longer sonatas for wind band.⁹

Most of these pieces occupy no more than a single page in their original form for solo keyboard. Even the two that Bach also used as movements of the Sonata W. 65/50—probably not their original function—are relatively short. The arrangements leave many pieces in essentially their original form; for instance, the Andante from the Sonata W. 65/50 contains forty-five measures, as do the versions for keyboard trio and wind band.¹⁰ The trio version, not surprisingly, leaves the original composition largely intact in the keyboard part, adding subsidiary accompanying parts for clarinet and bassoon. The arrangement for wind ensemble transfers the melody and bass to the first flute and bassoon, respectively, with few changes. Other wind parts provide either doublings

⁷ W. 184, 92, and 115 appear near the top of the list of “Kleinere Stücke” listed in NV, p. 52, together with the Six Marches W. 185 and the Two Little Pieces W. 186. All are marked “H,” indicating that they originated at Hamburg, but only the entry for W. 184 also includes a date (1775).

⁸ The manuscript, P 748, is reproduced in full in Berg, 5:129–34. Among four compositions added on the last page of the manuscript are alternate versions of two of the Six Little Pieces, listed in NV as item 175 and edited in CPEBCW 1/8.2:72–76.

⁹ The Allegro ma non troppo W. 116/52 and the Allegretto grazioso W. 116/57 (a rondo) are significantly longer than other such pieces and may actually be keyboard reductions of their ensemble versions; see below.

¹⁰ In its extant form, however, the version for solo keyboard (65/50, movement 2), is somewhat more ornate than the ensemble versions; it must represent an embellished version of a lost draft that served independently as the basis for all the surviving versions. The rondo from the same keyboard sonata (W. 65/50, movement 1) is likewise independent of the two ensemble versions, which lack the repeat of the theme in its final statement.

or harmonic and rhythmic filler.

On the other hand, the third of the Six Little Pieces, W. 116/25 in D, was originally a rounded binary form comprising two periodic phrases of 8 + 8 measures each. The arrangements for two keyboards and for keyboard trio both expand this by adding twelve additional measures at the end of each half. In the keyboard duo, moreover, the original melodic line is varied or embellished while also being divided between the two parts (online example 10.38). The transposition of the trio version to E-flat was dictated by the decision to include a B-flat clarinet, but why the keyboard duet was also transposed to a “flat” key (B-flat) is less clear. Possibly Bach prepared the duo version from the version for wind ensemble and not directly from the original. Considerations of range might also have come into play; in the four duetti, the second keyboard part ascends only to d^{'''}, and perhaps only one of the instruments belonging to the intended recipient had the compass up to f^{'''} required by the first part. Whatever the reason, the four keyboard duets fail to constitute a satisfactory series, their sequence of keys (B-flat, F, A minor, E-flat) seeming almost random.

Even where Bach did not significantly expand the originals, the arrangements for keyboard trio reveal some imagination in re-assigning brief passages to the clarinet and bassoon, as in the *couplets* of the piece that also served as the opening rondo in W. 65/50 (online example 10.39). Yet Bach's arrangements in general show little effort to adjust or develop his original ideas to make them idiomatic for particular instruments or ensembles. Although the arrangements employ distinctive and engaging sonorities (especially when played with piquant eighteenth-century woodwinds and natural horns), the melodies, basses, and inner voices are conceived largely in terms of the same three-part texture that prevails in Bach's other music; only the horn parts can be readily identified with their particular instrumental medium. This suggests that, in fulfilling commissions for simple entertainment music, perhaps to be played by amateurs, Bach saw no need for something more imaginative that would have made greater demands on players or listeners.

Still, the durations alone of these pieces (when played with the indicated repeats) suggest that they are not utterly trivial, and some achieve dimensions approaching those of serious chamber compositions. Among the six one-movement sonatas for wind band (W. 184) are two fairly substantial rondos, one of them the concluding number of the set. The latter, although not approaching the dimensions or seriousness of the modulating rondos for piano, ends, like the final movements in most of Bach's *sinfonias*, with a little coda that brings the set to a rousing finish. Another movement in this set, no. 4, is also relatively extended, constituting a complete sonata form. Although it exists in a keyboard version, the relatively unidiomatic character of the latter suggests that the ensemble version may be the original.¹¹

¹¹ The same is suggested by the notation of the sole source of W. 116/52 (Bc 5898), which divides the beams of eighth notes in mm. 9–10 and elsewhere not according to the meter but rather to correspond with the division of the melodic line between horns, flutes, and clarinets, respectively in W. 184/4. (This beaming is preserved in the modern transcription of the source in Berg, 5:175–77.)

Example 10.38. (a) Allegro in D, W. 116/24, (a) mm. 1–4, 13–16; (b) Duetto in B-flat, W. 115/1, mm. 1–4, 13–20

Allegro

(a)

kb. 1

13

(b)

Allegro

kb. 1

13

kb. 2

14

The image displays a musical score for two keyboard instruments, labeled 'kb. 1' and 'kb. 2'. The score is divided into two parts, (a) and (b). Part (a) is titled 'Allegro' and is in D major (two sharps) and 2/4 time. It shows measures 1-4 and 13-16. Part (b) is also titled 'Allegro' and is in B-flat major (two flats) and 2/4 time. It shows measures 1-4 and 13-20. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, a key signature of two sharps for (a) and two flats for (b), and a 2/4 time signature. Various musical notations such as trills (tr), slurs, and dynamic markings are present. Measure numbers 13 and 14 are indicated at the start of their respective systems.

[Example 10.39. \(a\) Sonata in G, movement 1, mm. 17–20; \(b\) Keyboard Trio in E-flat, W. 92/2, 17–20](#)

(a) 17

kb.

(b) 17

clar.

kb.

bn.

p

p

p

Within this set, even the arranged movements show some imagination in scoring, not always adhering to formula. The two flutes take the role of the violins in Bach's music for strings, sometimes playing in unison, sometimes divided. In “tutti” passages (generally corresponding to *forte* phrases in the original versions) the flutes are doubled by the two clarinets, either at the unison or an octave lower, sometimes in a simplified version of the flute line (online example 10.40). Elsewhere the clarinets may alternate with the flutes, exchanging brief motivic ideas with them, or they may accompany them by providing a bass and an inner voice; hence they correspond sometimes to the oboes, sometimes to the second violin and viola in orchestral scores. The horns usually play their traditional roles, but they also provide the bass in some passages, and Bach occasionally gives them little motivic statements as well—more frequently than in his orchestral music. Only the bassoon has an entirely conventional role as bass to the woodwinds (never, as in later orchestration, to the horns). Bach, incidentally, treats the bassoon rather conservatively in the pieces for wind band; in the keyboard trios, however, it ascends routinely to a-flat, often paired with the clarinet as an alto or tenor voice in *piano* passages that alternate with the keyboard.

None of the sonatas in W. 184 could have struck Bach or his listeners as very important, even if these pieces are more sophisticated than the many little marches and dances that he also arranged

in multiple settings. The routines involved in their production were similar to those that Bach was employing at the same time in his liturgical music. Most of the latter likewise comprises arrangements that involved varying degrees of recomposition and “renovation,” but at least with the present music the originals were Bach's own.

[Example 10.40. Sonata for Winds in E-flat, W. 184/4, mm. 21–28](#)

The image displays a musical score for a wind ensemble, specifically measures 21 through 28 of a Sonata in E-flat major for Winds, BWV 184/4. The score is arranged in two systems of four staves each. The instruments are Flute (fl.), Clarinet (clar.), Horn (hn.), and Bassoon (bn.).

The first system (measures 21-24) features a dynamic of *p* (piano). The flute and clarinet parts have rests in measures 21 and 22, with their entries in measure 23. The horn and bassoon parts play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in measure 21, which continues in measure 22. The bassoon part has a rest in measure 23.

The second system (measures 25-28) begins with a dynamic of *f* (forte) in measure 25. The flute part features a series of trills (tr.) in measures 25, 26, and 27. The clarinet part has a rest in measure 25 and enters in measure 26. The horn and bassoon parts continue with their rhythmic patterns. The bassoon part has a rest in measure 27. The system concludes in measure 28 with a dynamic of *p* (piano) and trills in the flute and bassoon parts.