

David Schulenberg
The Music of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach
Supplement 2.2: Bach and the Pedal Clavichord

Particularly germane is Joel Speerstra's discussion of the organ sonatas BWV 525–30.¹ Emanuel Bach referred to “6 Claviertrio”—presumably these pieces—in a letter to Forkel of Oct. 7, 1774.² But the so-called Comparison of Handel and J. S. Bach, published anonymously in 1788 in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek*,³ describes the same pieces as “trios for the organ” (*Trios für die Orgel*). Both accounts stress that the pieces, although old, remain good; the Comparison claims that they are “written in such *galant* style that they still sound very good and will not age but will outlive all stylistic revolutions [*Moderevoluzioni*] in music.”⁴

The Comparison, incidentally, has usually been attributed to Bach ever since Dragan Plamenac noticed parallels between that essay and a letter to his friend Eschenburg that Bach had written two years earlier.⁵ In his letter to Eschenburg, Bach also, like the author of the Comparison, overlooks the simple pedal part in the first concerto in Handel's opus 7 set, published posthumously in 1761. It would be more logical, however, to conclude that Eschenburg himself wrote the Comparison on the basis of his exchanges with Bach. Bach's coaching of reviewers during his Hamburg years is well established, and Eschenburg would have had greater reason for preserving his anonymity, having recently translated Burney's *Account of the Musical Performances in Commemoration of Handel*. Bach, in his letter, is critical of the latter, and the Comparison is a response to contemporary “idolatory” of Handel, especially as expressed by Burney.

¹ *Bach and the Pedal Clavichord*, chap. 2.

² Suchalla, 1:447; translation in Clark, *Letters*, 67.

³ Item 927 in BD3, 442; translated in NBR, 407.

⁴ See NBR, 401–9 (item no. 396), especially p. 406; original in BD 3:441 (no. 927).

⁵ “New Light on the Last Years of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach.” Bach's letter of Jan. 21, 1786 is no. 287 in Clark, *Letters*, 242–43.