

*David Schulenberg*  
***The Music of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach***  
**Supplement 2.1. Non-musical Aspects of Emanuel's Upbringing**

Music was not the only thing that Emanuel studied. His urbane letters and other writings, although dating from much later in his life, must reflect his training at school and as a law student in the Leipzig and Frankfurt universities. In what sense and to what degree Sebastian was a “learned” musician (to use Christoph Wolff’s characterization) is not entirely clear, but the adjective certainly applies to his two oldest sons and to many other pupils.<sup>1</sup> Growing up in Leipzig, Emanuel would have benefited not only from his father’s burgeoning book collection but from exposure to some of the leading local intellectuals. He would have mastered Latin and perhaps French and Italian; legal training would have sharpened what was no doubt an innate capacity for rigorous logic and analytical thinking. This would stand him in good stead not only as a writer on music theory but as a reader of poetry to be set to music. Sebastian, to be sure, managed to become a sensitive composer of vocal music without university training, but throughout life he was reluctant to commit words to paper. Emanuel was not; more importantly, he could converse ably and wittily with his peers on matters ranging from theology and philosophy to literature and the visual arts. This would make him a valued member of the intellectual circles of Berlin and Hamburg, and we can imagine that he was already a respected conversationalist at Leipzig and Frankfurt.

Emanuel’s learning would have been of a different type from that of his father. What Wolff describes as Sebastian’s “major achievements in musical science”<sup>2</sup> are scientific only in an archaic sense or that of German *Wissenschaft*; they represent humanistic learning in traditional rhetoric, theology, and the like, not the experimental or observational science described mathematically by Newton and other contemporaries. The distinction might not yet have been entirely clear to Sebastian and his students during the 1720s and 1730s. Yet it could have been intuited by someone such as Friedemann Bach, who is said to have taken a serious interest in mathematics—presumably of a more advanced type than the simple arithmetic involved in calculating musical intervals or the formal proportions of a composition.

The rise of experimental science was an important feature of the Enlightenment, which coincides roughly with Emanuel’s career. His recurring use of certain standard formal designs might, like the highly stylized systems of ornamentation and continuo figuration found in his music, be seen as products of the rationalistic, systematic thinking favored by this movement, although these also characterize music of his contemporaries. The same habits of thought are evident in the *Versuch*, his contribution to the library of encyclopedic writings on music that were produced during the eighteenth century. Together with the well-known works by Quantz (1752) and Leopold Mozart (1756), and the less famous but equally important one by Agricola (1757), these reflected the

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<sup>1</sup> Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 306–7, describes the “academic atmosphere” of the St. Thomas school and the university at Leipzig, noting that Sebastian’s first three sons all “enjoyed the benefits of a university education not available to their father or grandfathers.”

<sup>2</sup> *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 8.

Enlightenment interest in systematically chronicling the learning and technology of the day.

Sebastian has also been claimed for the Enlightenment, but he is less likely than the university-trained Emanuel to have consciously adhered to its tenets—not that the latter can be easily summarized. Emanuel's identification with the movement is based in part on his professional and social associations later in life with such figures as Lessing and Moses Mendelssohn. The German version of the Enlightenment (the *Aufklärung*) was never antithetical toward religion, as the French version often was. After leaving Leipzig, Emanuel entered the service of a famously agnostic if not atheistic monarch, but there is no reason to suppose that Bach was in the slightest way antagonistic toward the orthodox Lutheran religion of his ancestors. Among his Berlin colleagues, those closest to King Frederick—the flutist Quantz and the opera composer Carl Heinrich Graun—expressed their Christian convictions by participating in the revival of sacred strophic song during the 1750s. Graun, who wrote many sacred vocal works for the Lutheran service early in his career, gives not the slightest indication of agnosticism in his letters to Telemann. We must suppose that Graun and his colleagues viewed the pagan heroes of his *opere serie* as models of probity and other virtues that were worthy of a Christian as well as a philosopher-king. Sebastian himself took a similar tack in his serenatas (secular “cantatas”) in honor of the Saxon ruling house, composed during the very years when Emanuel was entering maturity.