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The Music of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach
Supplement 7.7. Other “Little Pieces”

Among Bach's “little pieces” are a few whose designation as *solfeggi* alluded directly to their pedagogic use. The term, originally referring to vocal exercises, was also applied to collections of extracts used for instrumental practice.¹ One of these, in C minor (W. 117/2), became famous in nineteenth- and twentieth-century reprints, selected perhaps because its non-stop motion in sixteenths recalls some of Sebastian's more etude-like preludes.² Another example, the penultimate work in the Pieces of Various Types (W. 112/18, also listed as W. 117/7), is Bach's sole contribution to the specialized genre of the canonic sonata. It is a little not-quite-rounded binary form comprising two parts in canon at the octave. Quantz's recently published volume of six flute duos (Berlin, 1759) had closed with a canon; Bach's canonic Solfeggio, together with the fugue that followed it in W. 112, forms a pair that mirrors the two volumes of Marpurg's *Abhandlung von der Fuge* (Berlin, 1753–54), treating of normal fugue and canon, respectively.³

Bach's other *solfeggi* focus on technical rather than compositional issues. Yet despite his concern with proper fingering, Emanuel never wrote pieces that address specific technical problems quite as Sebastian had done, exercising the outer fingers of each hand, for example, in the prelude in D from WTC1. That required composing an entire movement out of a single motive, something for which Emanuel had little patience. His *solfeggi* have a fragmentary character, reflecting their relationship to excerpt books and bringing them close to some of the smaller fantasias published alongside them in W. 112 and elsewhere. The most important of these is one in G minor (W. 117/13) composed in 1766; it is a somewhat longer pendant to the D-major fantasy (W. 117/14), which illustrated the chapter on improvisation in the second volume of the *Versuch*.

Like most of his other keyboard works of the 1750s, the majority of Bach's “little pieces” are clearly not for the harpsichord but were probably meant primarily for the clavichord.⁴ Even

¹ Most famously in the *Solfeggi pour la flute traversiere avec l'enseignement* attributed to Quantz (DK Kmk, Gieddes samling, I, 16; modern edition by Winfried Michel and Hermien Teske, Winterthur: Amadeus, 1978). The examples include excerpts from Bach's two flute concertos of the mid-1740s; Oleskiewicz, “Quantz and the Flute at Dresden,” 58n.89, describes the extant source as a late eighteenth-century copy.

² This is the so-called Solfeggietto, which Bach originally published in his anthology *Musicalisches Vielerley*, issued at Hamburg four years after he composed the piece at Potsdam in 1766. The modern title has been traced to a nineteenth-century edition by Berthold Tours that added two superfluous beats at the end, allowing the piece to close on middle C instead of breaking off in the upper register (see Parkinson, “The 'Solfeggietto'”).

³ On canonic sonatas generally, especially at Berlin, see Oleskiewicz, “More on Fasch and the Canonic Trio Sonata.”

⁴ A group of five pieces with French titles (W. 117/28 and 30–33, listed in NV as entry no. 87) constitutes an exception. These lack dynamic markings, and no. 3, “Les langueurs tendres,”

Couperin's *pièces de clavecin* were probably now often heard at Berlin on clavichords or fortepianos, if they were still played at all. For Bach, the new instrumental media are reflected by stylistic changes that make these genuine *galant* pieces, not imitations of French Baroque compositions. This holds even for the Suite W. 62/12, composed in 1751 and published ten years later in an anthology (*Musikalisches Allerley*) alongside sonatas and other pieces probably also intended primarily for clavichord. The suite contains obvious echoes of Sebastian's music, as in the opening reference to his First French Suite, and there is even a suggestion of Rameau's “Niais de Sologne” in the third minuet (online examples 7.26 and 7.27). Yet its *galant* character is clear in the parallel thirds at the beginning of the courante (online example 7.28) and in the absence of the traditional French Baroque rhythms from most of the ostensive dance movements.

[Example 7.26. \(a\) Suite in E Minor, W. 62/12, movement 1 \(Allemande\), mm. 1–2; \(b\) J. S. Bach, French Suite no. 1 in D Minor, BWV 812, movement 1 \(Allemande\), mm. 1–2](#)

The image shows two musical excerpts, (a) and (b), both labeled "Allemande". Excerpt (a) is from the Suite in E Minor, W. 62/12, movement 1. It features a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The bass clef part has a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The melody in the treble clef is characterized by eighth-note patterns and rests. Excerpt (b) is from J. S. Bach's French Suite no. 1 in D Minor, BWV 812, movement 1. It features a treble clef with a key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb) and a common time signature (C). The bass clef part has a key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb) and a common time signature (C). The melody in the treble clef is characterized by eighth-note patterns and rests.

[Example 7.27. \(a\) Suite in E Minor, W. 62/12, movement 6 \(Minuet 3\), mm. 1–4; \(b\) Rameau, “Les Niais de Sologne,” mm. 1–2](#)

The image shows two musical excerpts, (a) and (b). Excerpt (a) is from the Suite in E Minor, W. 62/12, movement 6 (Minuet 3). It features a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The bass clef part has a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The melody in the treble clef is characterized by quarter notes and rests, with trills (tr) indicated above some notes. Excerpt (b) is from Rameau's “Les Niais de Sologne,” mm. 1–2. It features a treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F#, C#) and a 2/4 time signature. The bass clef part has a key signature of two sharps (F#, C#) and a 2/4 time signature. The melody in the treble clef is characterized by quarter notes and rests, with trills (tr) indicated above some notes. The bass clef part is labeled "Notes égales" and features a continuous eighth-note pattern.

seems to require the two manuals of a harpsichord to execute its crossing lines, although this is not indicated explicitly.

Except in this retrospective work, such dances as Bach would now write are largely confined to relatively easy minuets and polonaises. The polonaise, despite its Polish origin, had originally been close to the minuet musically, and Emanuel had written a few examples in his youth. Those of the 1750s and 1760s tend to be more florid and presume a slower tempo, perhaps with something of a swagger. Although far from the grandeur of Chopin's examples, they share with the latter a tendency to cadence on the second beat. The polonaises published in the *Musikalisches Vielerley* require considerable skill to play, but Emanuel never produced anything like the twelve virtuoso polonaises composed by Friedemann (F. 12). Emanuel's polonaises often alternate with somewhat simpler minuets in the same keys; a few of the latter are mildly engaging, especially through their use of canon—W. 116/5/1 is a palindrome—but musically they tend to be simpler, lacking the humor of the polonaises.

[Example 7.28. Suite in E Minor, W. 62/12, movement 2 \(Courante\), mm. 1–3](#)

