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The Music of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach
Supplement 5.4. Editorial treatment of Bach's revisions

Modern editions have treated Bach's revisions variously. An early effort by Wilhelm Altmann presented simultaneously the versions for cello, flute, and keyboard of the A-Minor Concerto W. 26.¹ This was the model for a similar edition of the Concerto in A major W. 29.² Other editions typically provide only a single version (not always Bach's latest one), or they may present alternate versions in ways that make it difficult to compare the latter with the main text.

The latest effort to issue Bach's complete works is inconsistent in its treatment of alternate versions. For instance, in CPEBCW 3/9.15, containing Bach's last two solo keyboard concertos W. 44 and 45, the main text incorporates many early readings; one must scan the textual commentary for readings that represent Bach's latest version of the solo part. The same is true in W. 25, edited in CPEBCW 3/7, where the aim to reproduce Bach's published version of 1752 perhaps justified the placement of a later “embellished solo keyboard part” in the appendix; although preserved only in manuscript, it is of unquestionable authenticity. More typically, the main text gives a late version, and early readings must be extracted from lists of variants. Yet the latter do not necessarily represent Bach's first version, which in some cases is entirely disregarded. For instance, the editor of the Concerto W. 28 asserts plausibly that its early version is extant in SA 2591, yet fails to report the readings of this source.³ The early version of W. 4 is amply documented but can be accessed only in the present author's separate [online edition](#). In the printed version, the designation of certain readings as “Bach's additions, corrections, and revisions” does not reflect the author's view that only a few of the individual readings listed in the editorial commentary can be ascribed with certainty to the composer.⁴ Those seeking a detailed explanation of how Bach went about revising his compositions may nevertheless find one in the discussion of the revisions for the concertos W. 4, 5, and 6 as a group in CPEBCW 3/9.2: 167–69 and on the individual works on pp. 175–77 (W. 4), 187–88 (W. 5), and 200–203 (W. 6).

¹ Leipzig: Eulenburg, 1938. Altmann's edition is unreliable, as explained in CPEBCW 3/9.8:243.

² Edited by Hans Maria Kneihls (Zürich: Eulenburg, 1967).

³ Despite the remark “see commentary below” (CPEBCW 3/9.9:148).

⁴ CPEBCW 3/9.2:178.