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Žarko Cvejić*
Singidunum University in Belgrade
Faculty of Media and Communication

FROM "BACH" TO "BACH'S SON": THE WORK OF AESTHETIC IDEOLOGY IN THE HISTORICAL RECEPTION OF CARL PHILIPP EMANUEL BACH

Abstract: The paper explores the historical correlation between the marginalization of C. P. E. Bach in his posthumous critical reception in the early and mid 19th century and the paradigm shift that occurred in the philosophical, aesthetic, and ideological conception of music in Europe around 1800, whereby music was reconceived as a radically abstract and disembodied art of expression, as opposed to the Enlightenment idea of music as an irreducibly sensuous, sonic art of representation. More precisely, the paper argues that the cause of C. P. E. Bach's marginalization in his posthumous critical reception should not be sought only in the shadow cast by his father, J. S. Bach, and the focus of 19th- and 20th-century music historiography on periodization, itself centred around "great men", but also in the fundamental incompatibility between this new aesthetic and philosophical ideology of music from around 1800 and C. P. E. Bach's oeuvre, predicated as it was on an older aesthetic paradigm of music, with its reliance on musical performance, especially improvisation, itself undervalued in early and mid 19th-century music criticism for the same reasons. Other factors might also include C. P. E. Bach's use of the genre of fantasia, as well as the sheer stylistic idiosyncrasy of much of his music, especially the fantasias and other works he wrote *für Kenner* ("for connoisseurs"). This might also explain why his music was so quickly sidelined despite its pursuit of "free" expression, a defining ideal of early to mid 19th-century music aesthetics.
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* Author contact information: zarko.cvejic@fmk.edu.rs

For most of the 18th century and even well into the following century, in Germany and much of Europe, the name Bach, when appearing alone, was almost invariably taken to refer to "the Berlin" or "Hamburg Bach" – Carl Philipp Emanuel, Johann Sebastian's second son. In England, it could also refer to "the London Bach", Johann Christian, Sebastian's third son and Emanuel's younger half-brother. But in those days, by itself that venerable name hardly ever referred to their father, Johann Sebastian, as it invariably does today, and has done since the days of his "revival" initiated by Felix Mendelssohn in 1829, itself importantly prefigured by Johann Nikolaus Forkel's monumental life-and-works biography of J. S. Bach, which took decades to complete and finally came out in 1802. As for his more famous son, "a gigantic figure of North German music culture in the 1770s and 1780s",[1] "held by his critics to embody all those qualities which, for the philosophers of the Enlightenment, characterize the man of genius",[2] for "much of his lifetime […] the best-known member of the family", from the 1830s on, C. P. E. Bach increasingly came to be "considered a minor or transitional figure, of primarily historical interest",[3] "a transitional figure in a history of musical form and style",[4] even "a miserly and avaricious businessman more interested in money than in art".[5] Interest in his compositions "waned shortly after the turn of the century" and his stature was reduced to that of "a bridge and transition figure between the eighteenth-century 'great men' – J. S. Bach and the Viennese masters Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven – or as a transition between the Baroque and Classical eras with his *galant* style".[6]

Most C. P. E. Bach scholars have tended to blame his pretty spectacular fall from grace, from a "man of genius" to "an almost great composer",[7] on the

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1 Annette Richards, "An Enduring Monument: C. P. E. Bach and the Musical Sublime", in: Annette Richards (ed.), *C. P. E. Bach Studies*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, 152.

2 Richard Kramer, "Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach and the Aesthetics of Patricide", in: Stephen A. Crist and Roberta Montemorra Marvin (eds.), *Historical Musicology: Sources, Methods, Interpretations*, Rochester NY, University of Rochester Press, 2004, 122.

3 David Schulenberg, "Introduction", in: David Schulenberg (ed.), *C. P. E. Bach*, Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 2015, xiii.

4 Ibid., xvi.

5 David Ferris, "Plates for Sale: C. P. E. Bach and the Story of *Die Kunst der Fuge*", in: Richards (ed.), op. cit., 202.

6 Doris Bosworth Powers, *Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach: A Guide to Research*, New York, Routledge, 2011, 7.

7 Hans-Günther Ottenberg, *C. P. E. Bach,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987, 183.

imposition of large-scale narratives of periodization in 19th- and 20th-century historical musicology, centred around the "great men" and styles of 18th- and 19th-century central European (i.e. German) music. Their views are further discussed and exemplified below. However, in this paper I want to highlight another factor that may have equally contributed to C. P. E. Bach's marginalization in his posthumous critical reception, but has yet to receive, in my mind, the scholarly attention it deserves: the radical change in the aesthetic and philosophical conception or ideology of music around 1800, from a sensuous art of representation, inseparable from sound, to an abstract and intellectual art of expression, which, as I argue below, fuelled a rising hostility to all genres grounded in improvisation, most notably the fantasia, and, more broadly, to improvisation itself, due to its own grounding in musical performance, that is, the sensuous, bodily aspect of music. Unfortunately for Emanuel Bach, his most characteristic works are precisely his 19 "free" improvisatory keyboard fantasias and, as a number of scholars have shown, improvisation played a vital role in his compositional oeuvre in general. That arguably put him at odds with the prevailing music aesthetic ideology of the early to mid 19th century, so much so that not even his pursuit of free musical expression, otherwise a mainstay of music aesthetics after 1800, could save him from oblivion. Another factor explored below is the problem of originality in composition, which was universally expected, but which also attracted censure whenever it crossed the boundaries of the musically and culturally intelligible, as in the case of, for instance, Chopin and, as I argue below, C. P. E. Bach's fantasias and similar works. Presently, I begin with a sketch of Emanuel Bach's critical reception in his lifetime and the decades that followed, before offering my own interpretation.

* * *

"At this point", writes Hans-Günther Ottenberg, referring to Emanuel Bach's death in 1788, "begins the history of the reception of Bach's music, which had been foreshadowed even during his lifetime in its two most extreme forms – unlimited acclaim and total neglect".[8] Indeed, in his lifetime celebrated with almost no restraint, both in highbrow scholarship intended for the *Kenner* and in journalistic music criticism targeting the *Liebhaber*, to borrow his own terms, shortly thereafter C. P. E. Bach was plunged into near oblivion or, at

8 Ottenberg, op. cit., 24–25.

best, remembered as his father's inadequate heir or Haydn and Mozart's inferior precursor; in either case, no more than a faithful representative of an unclassifiable period of music history that was commonly deemed barren, if not outright decadent. Never entirely marginalized as a *Kleinmeister* due to his enormous esteem and popularity up until the early 19th century, that and the following century's music scholarship and criticism relegated Bach to the unenviable status of a transitory figure, a composer whose interest lies not in his works but only in the historical niche allocated to him: that of the missing link between his celebrated father as the 19th and 20th centuries' epitome of musical greatness and the equally revered Viennese Classics. This missing link, as the likes of Sir George Grove and Charles Rosen would have us believe, exemplifies and illustrates all the perceived aesthetic deficiencies of the third quarter of the 18th century, a notoriously tough nut to crack in terms of periodization: a "decadence" that "had to ensue" after J. S. Bach "had exhausted" the aesthetic potentials of the baroque period and before the mature Haydn and Mozart could solidify and impose a fresh stylistic paradigm. Only in this and the final two decades of the preceding century did Emanuel Bach retrieve some of the esteem he had lost a hundred years before, mostly thanks to the efforts of several German and British-American musicologists. Earlier 20th-century scholarship, epitomized in Rosen's *The Classical Style*, among other places, had scarcely treated the composer with benevolence.

In Emanuel Bach's own lifetime, however, things were entirely different. "Any reference to the 'great Bach' in the second half of the eighteenth century almost always meant C. P. E. Bach", Ottenberg writes in his introductory assessment of Bach's reception.[9] Ulrich Leisinger likewise captures the gist of the composer's initial fame and imminent undoing, when he writes:

> With Gluck and later Haydn, he was regarded by his contemporaries as the leading representative of a specifically German musical taste […]
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> Developments during the 19th century made Vienna the musical capital of the German-speaking part of Europe, even superseding Leipzig as the centre of the music-publishing industry, and to the extent that J. S. Bach was rediscovered as the "father" of German keyboard music, so Emanuel Bach's reputation began to fade.[10]

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[9] Ibid., 3.

[10] Ulrich Leisinger, "Bach, §III: (9) Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach", in: Stanley Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians,* London, Macmillan, 2001, II, 398.

Indeed, Emanuel Bach's music had been celebrated as the essence of all that was good about German and North German music in particular, as opposed to the inferior, "deviant", and "effeminate" Italians, French, and sometimes even Austrians and South Germans, with their slavish observance of the decorum of the *stile galant*, embraced, among others, by the composer's own younger brother Johann Christian, "the London Bach".

This nationalist and sometimes also chauvinist streak in the early German veneration of Emanuel Bach has been thoroughly documented by Mary Sue Morrow in her seminal study of 18th-century journalist music criticism in German-speaking Europe. Whilst compelling, Morrow's focus on incipient German nationalism in much of critical writing on music at the time is beyond the scope of this essay; for present purposes, it will suffice to note her general assessment of Emanuel Bach's position in this discourse as that of the most famous, popular, and revered authority of German modern music.[11] The importance of Morrow's findings stems not only from the immense impact that the German 18th-century music-journalist critical collective, as she calls it, had on the public appraisal of art music in Germany and, consequently, on canon formation, but also from the prominent role that some of Germany's most influential musical minds played within this collective. One such figure was Johann Friedrich Reichardt, himself an accomplished composer, whose verdict on Haydn and Bach very much sums up the two composers' positions in the late 18th-century public aesthetic appreciation of contemporary art music in the German-speaking world: "Even if we only had Haydn and C. P. E. Bach, we Germans could maintain that we have our own style, and that our instrumental music is the most interesting of all".[12]

Similar sentiments are likewise frequent in most other sources of late 18th-century appreciation of C. P. E. Bach's music. Charles Burney's account of German and Dutch contemporary music, coming as it does from one of the most erudite music connoisseurs of the time, is perhaps particularly revealing in its unbound praise for the composer. In what is otherwise a rather selective and succinct account of Burney's encounters with the leading composers and other musicians of his day, Emanuel Bach is allocated no fewer than three separate chapters: "C. P. E. Bach", "Life of C. P. E. Bach", and "A Day

11 Mary Sue Morrow, *German Music Criticism in the Late Eighteenth Century: Aesthetic Issues in Instrumental Music,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, especially 58–65.

12 Ibid., 60.

with C. P. E. Bach", comprising seven pages in total – quite a lot, given the compactness of Burney's narrative. Describing the musical life of Hamburg, where C. P. E. Bach spent the final two decades of his life, Burney rightly asserts Bach's central position:

> Hamburg is not at present, possessed of any musical professor of great eminence, except M. Carl Philip [*sic*] Emanuel Bach; but he is a legion! I had long contemplated, with the highest delight, his elegant and original compositions; and they had created in me so strong a desire to see, and to hear him, that I wanted no other musical temptation to visit this city.[13]

Burney then proceeds to praise the unique qualities of Bach's highly idiosyncratic style:

> How he formed his style, where he acquired all his taste and refinement, would be difficult to trace; he certainly neither inherited nor adopted them from his father, who was his only master; for that venerable musician, though unequalled in learning and contrivance, thought it so necessary to crowd into both hands all the harmony he could grasp, that he must inevitably have sacrificed melody and expression. Had the son however chosen a model, it would certainly have been his father, whom he highly reverenced; but as he has ever disdained imitation, he must have derived from nature alone, those fine feelings, that variety of new ideas, and selection of passages, which are so manifest in his compositions.
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> [...]
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> It must be owned, that the style of this author is so uncommon, that a little habit is necessary for the enjoyment of it.[14]

I quote Burney's impressions at length not only because they faithfully relay Emanuel Bach's general standing in his lifetime, but also because they already contain the germs of the imminent decline that his reputation would undergo in the following century. Already in Burney's juxtaposition of Sebastian and Emanuel, a trend in later music historiography comes into view, one that was to condition the 19th century's appreciation of both composers: apparently, their respective styles were seen as so incommensurable, that em-

13 Charles Burney, *An Eighteenth-century Musical Tour in Central Europe and the Netherlands,* London, Oxford University Press, 1959, II, 211. However, a word of caution must be added here, given that, as Mary Oleskiewicz notes, there is "evidence that Burney was selling Emanuel Bach's music in London, and he thus had good reason for praising it"; see Mary Oleskiewicz, "Like Father, Like Son? Emanuel Bach and the Writing of Biography", in: Schulenberg (ed.), op. cit., 25.

14 Burney, op. cit., 217–218.

bracing them on equal terms was simply inconceivable. Shortly after 1788, it was Sebastian who came to command the focus of most historiographic and aesthetic narratives, while his middle son was portrayed as an inferior and decadent heir or, at best, a proficient keyboardist, just as his father had been in most of his own lifetime. Some of this trend is visible as early as Ernst Ludwig Gerber's 1790 *Historisch-biographisches Lexicon der Tonkünstler*, in which, notwithstanding the detailed and comprehensive list of Emanuel Bach's works that takes up most of the article on the composer, Sebastian Bach is discussed in much more detail, both his life and the stylistic traits of his oeuvre.

Therefore, Darrell Berg's conclusion that the end of the 18th century saw not only Emanuel Bach's biological death, but also his symbolic death, seems quite compelling:

> Despite his fame as a composer of original genius, he did not survive the eighteenth century as a composer-god. At the end of the century, he died two symbolic deaths. The first was the loss of popularity his music suffered and its subsequent descent into virtual oblivion. This death had much to do with the ascendancy of the style of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, but it was also related to Bach's biological death (1788).[15]

Emanuel Bach's other symbolic death in Berg's narrative refers to Ludwig Rellstab's disfiguring edition of the late composer's works. Likewise for Ottenberg:

> In the nineteenth century, with the onset of a musical historiography orientated towards the phenomenon of the great composer, C. P. E. Bach was either completely ignored, or else dismissed as a mere "precursor". The importance of his work was assessed by the extent to which it had contributed to the development of the "golden age" of Haydn and Mozart.[16]

Thus the unflattering view of Emanuel Bach as the missing link between his father and the Viennese Classics began to emerge in scholarly discourse around 1800, which it ruled uncontested for the rest of the century, as is clearly visible in the 1879 *Grove* article on the Bach family:

> In this family musical talent was as it were bequeathed, and it seems almost like a law of nature that the scattered rays of the gift should after a hundred years fi-

[15] Darrell Berg, "The Death and Return of the Composer: Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach as Author of his Music", in: Barbara Haggh (ed.), *Essays on Music and Culture in Honor of Herbert Kellman*, Paris, Minerve, 2001, 463.

[16] Ottenberg, op. cit., 205.

> nally concentrate in the genius of JOHANN SEBASTIAN, whose originality, depth, and force, exhibit a climax such as only a few great spirits of any time or country have attained. But from this climax the artistic power of the race began to diminish, and with the second generation after its great representative was entirely extinguished.
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> […]
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> [I]t is plain that [C. P. E. Bach] stands so high because he is recognised historically as one of the most remarkable figures in the transition period between J. S. Bach and Haydn. In such periods a man is eminent and influential more from his general cultivation than from proficiency in any special branch. At the particular time at which E. Bach lived there were no great men. The gigantic days of Handel and Bach were exchanged for a time of peruke and powder, when the highest ideal was neatness, smoothness, and elegance. Depth, force, originality, were gone, and "taste" was the most important word in all things. […C. P. E. Bach's music] is of paramount importance as a connecting link between the periods of Handel and Bach on the one hand and Haydn and Mozart on the other.[17]

This gem of late 19th-century music historiography – complete with a miniature organicist narrative of rise, peak, and fall, which is then redeemed in the following evolutionary generation – takes us directly into the prevailing view of Bach in the greater part of the 20th century. While the earlier 20th-century focus on drawing unbroken music-historical narratives at all costs, in musicology famously criticized by Leo Treitler,[18] arguably took us away from explicit aestheticist valuations, such as Maczewski's of Emanuel Bach, aestheticist bias in the notion of the "transitory figure" is never more than one step away. To paraphrase – and counter – Carl Dahlhaus's strange claim that no one "had a burden to bear because Beethoven wielded authority in music" (if no one else, Schubert and Chopin immediately come to mind),[19] it would seem that at least C. P. E. Bach had a burden to bear in his posthumous reception because his father wielded such authority. Susan Wollenberg thus rightly notes

> an urge to find a place for C. P. E. Bach in a historical scheme; and this could at times indicate a wish to determine the label under which his work could conven-

[17] A. Maczewski, "Bach", in: George Grove (ed.), *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians (A.D. 1450–1880), by Eminent Writers, English and Foreign*, London, Macmillan and Co., 1879, I, 108–114.

[18] Leo Treitler, *Music and the Historical Imagination,* Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1989, 157–175.

[19] Carl Dahlhaus, *Foundations of Music History,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, 9.

iently be packed away, dismissed perhaps to the rank of "important influences" or "historical figures". The very idea of writing about C. P. E. Bach under such titles as "The Sons of Bach" or "The Bach Family", though obviously logical and convenient for comparative purposes, places the individual composer, not entirely to advantage, in a pre-ordained collective scheme.[20]

David Schulenberg likewise blames the incompatibility of Emanuel Bach's music with our preordained schemes of periodization, whereby it fits neither the "Baroque" nor the "Classical" style heading, for the scholarly neglect and undervaluation of his oeuvre.[21]

However, I would argue that the *Diktat* of periodization in later music historiography was not the only reason why C. P. E. Bach was so quickly marginalized in his posthumous reception. In fact, I would propose at least another two factors linked with his oeuvre, which may seem counterintuitive at first, but will be explained in what follows: the sheer originality and uniqueness, even idiosyncrasy, of his *Emfindsamer Stil* or "sensitive" style, especially in his music for *Kenner*, and his pursuit of abstract, free musical expression, most notably in his 19 "free" improvisatory keyboard fantasias. I begin with the former factor: stylistic idiosyncrasy.

That C. P. E. Bach's music, especially the more difficult and demanding instrumental, typically keyboard pieces he wrote, in his own designation, for *Kenner*, that is, connoisseurs and himself, not for *Liebhaber* or amateurs, that is, the music market at large,[22] was highly original and sometimes idiosyncratic to the point of being strange is, of course, a well known fact among modern C. P. E. Bach scholars and connoisseurs of his music. "Bach's music sounds like no one else's", Richard Kramer writes concerning this body of works; "It is radical and idiosyncratic beyond anything in the music of even his closest contemporaries".[23] In Doris Bosworth Powers's assessment, he was "one of the most imaginative" composers of the late 18th century, his music "full of unusual musical features through which he imprints his individual-

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20 Susan Wollenberg, "Changing Views of C. P. E. Bach", *Music and Letters,* Vol. 69, No. 4, 1988, 461.

21 David Schulenberg, "The Instrumental Music of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach", doctoral dissertation, Ann Arbor, UMI Research Press, 1984, 191.

22 "Bach made a distinction between music composed for the small circle of connoisseurs – music essentially for himself – and that which was intended for sale to a less endowed public"; see Kramer, op. cit., 126.

23 Ibid., 128.

ized and highly creative style".[24] Those unusual musical features most notably refer to his innovative and daring use of harmony – abrupt, often enharmonic modulations to distant keys, frequently using harmonic ellipsis – and irregular, disjointed phrasing, replete with sudden and stark contrasts in mood and dynamics. It was for this kind of daring originality that his contemporaries, such as Reichardt, praised him as "an original genius"[25] and "an exemplary artist of the sublime".[26] Indeed, according to Darrell Berg, Emanuel Bach's critical reception as a composer peaked "in the 1770s, when the concept of 'original genius' with its divine aspect attained great prestige", whereupon he was frequently praised "as a composer of originality and of more than human inspiration".[27]

However, *too much* stylistic originality, or excessive idiosyncrasy, could equally be a liability, as much as an asset. That much can be gleaned even from the final sentence of Burney's otherwise unreserved praise of C. P. E. Bach's music quoted above: "It must be owned, that the style of this author is *so uncommon, that a little habit is necessary for the enjoyment of it*" (emphasis mine).[28] Thus even Burney, one of Bach's most ardent supporters (and a seller of his music in London), sensed a danger in the sheer originality and uniqueness of his music, in other words, that some of it may sound a bit *too* uncommon, too strange, for most ears and minds. In fact, even in his lifetime, C. P. E. Bach's music was not invariably praised for its uniqueness, but also censured as "eccentric", "bizarre", lacking in "musical logic" or simply "illogical".[29] As such, his music, at least his most difficult works, typically the 19 "free", "improvisatory" keyboard fantasias, which, as Matthew Head has shown, constitute the pinnacle of Bach's art as the intended locus of his greatest efforts and as such permeated other segments of his oeuvre as well,[30] ran the risk of swerving from the other to the abject, to borrow the title of Lawrence

[24] Powers, op. cit., 1–2.

[25] Ibid., 1.

[26] Richards, op. cit., 152.

[27] Berg, op. cit., 462.

[28] Burney, op. cit., 217–218.

[29] See Ottenberg, op. cit., 5 and Pamela Fox, "The Stylistic Anomalies of C. P. E. Bach's Nonconstancy", in: Stephen L. Clark (ed.), *C. P. E. Bach Studies,* Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988, 105.

[30] Matthew Head, "Fantasy in the Instrumental Music of C. P. E. Bach", doctoral dissertation, Ann Arbor, UMI Research Press, 1995.

Kramer's famous essay, now almost a quarter of a century old but not for that reason any less compelling in its analysis of the work of "othering" or "alterity" in the cultural appreciation of music (among many other things).[31] If it is to be appreciated at all, the other must retain at least some vaguely recognizable characteristics similar to the norm (or "the self"), so that it might be identified as belonging to an existing category, for instance, a style heading or period in the history of music; otherwise, it risks being rejected, or *abjected,* to borrow Kramer's term, as simply *too* other. In much of early 19th-century music criticism, German, French, and English alike, the one that ignored C. P. E. Bach's music, a similar fate often befell other composers who were deemed too *other* for their own good, whether in terms of musical style, ethnicity, sexuality, or even health, or any combination thereof, most notably Chopin, as I tried to show elsewhere in more detail.[32] While certainly desirable, stylistic originality and uniqueness still had to be kept within certain limits – the limits of intelligible musical logic. Like Chopin's, it is possible that Emanuel Bach's harmonically and formally difficult music was simply perceived as too other, too idiosyncratic, too abnormal.

In addition to the radical originality or stylistic idiosyncrasy of C. P. E. Bach's most avant-garde music, the other factor in his contemporary and posthumous critical reception singled out above was his pursuit of free, unfettered musical expression, especially in his music for *Kenner,* most notably his 19 "free" improvisatory keyboard fantasias. "Both in his compositional activities and in his own playing", Bosworth Powers writes, Bach was "inclined toward the free form of the fantasy and toward the art of improvisation".[33] In his lifetime, Bach was indeed praised for what was perceived as his unbound artistic self-expression, in journalist music criticism and scholarly discourse alike.[34] This should be hardly surprising, since it coincided with the inauguration of free, pure expression – expression for expression's sake – as the paradigm and main purpose of art and especially instrumental art music in late 18th-century aesthetics, replacing mimesis, that is, morally instructive

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31 Lawrence Kramer, "From the Other to the Abject: Music as Cultural Trope", in: *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995.

32 Žarko Cvejić, *The Virtuoso as Subject: The Reception of Instrumental Virtuosity,* c. *1815*–c. *1850*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016, 155–164.

33 Powers, op. cit., 2.

34 Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music,* Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1989, 52.

or edifying imitation or representation of nature.[35] Whereas leading thinkers of the Enlightenment, such as Rousseau, Kant, the Encyclopaedists Batteux, D'Alembert, and Diderot, and Johann Sulzer, had expected music to imitate or *represent* feelings (or affects), the following generation of thinkers around 1800 regarded *expression* as the main task of all art and especially of instrumental music – the expression of what is otherwise ineffable. Famously, according to E. T. A. Hoffmann, music liberated from words

> reveals to man an unknown realm, a world quite separate from the outer sensual world surrounding him, a world in which he leaves behind all feelings circumscribed by intellect in order to embrace the inexpressible.[36]

The limited ability of music, and especially instrumental music, to represent (or "imitate") specific concepts, which disqualified it in the minds of its Enlightenment critics such as Kant and Sulzer, for whom all instrumental music was either merely an "agreeable art" or just "pleasant nonsense",[37] now became its greatest asset: more than any other art, (instrumental) music appears to represent and refer only to itself, rather than external objects, like the visual arts, or concepts, like vocal music and literature. If instrumental music communicates anything, it is something metaphysical, something that otherwise could not be communicated. And if the object of its expression might not be verbalized, but only *expressed* in music, so much the better for music and its exclusivity as "the most romantic of the arts", in E. T. A. Hoffmann's memorable phrase.[38]

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[35] I have written about this aesthetic paradigm shift in some detail in Cvejić, op. cit., 50–52 and 55–56. For more detailed discussions, see John Neubauer, *The Emancipation of Music from Language: Departure from Mimesis in Eighteenth-century Aesthetics*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1986 and Andrew Bowie, *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, 53ff.

[36] E. T. A. Hoffmann, "Beethoven's Instrumental Music", in: David Charlton (ed.), *E. T. A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings:* Kreisleriana, The Poet and the Composer, *Music Criticism,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989, 236.

[37] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, 206. I discussed this in some detail in Žarko Cvejić, "Andrew Bowie and Music in German Philosophy around 1800: The Case of Kant", in: Miško Šuvaković, Žarko Cvejić, and Andrija Filipović (eds.), *European Theories in Former Yugoslavia: Trans-theory Relations between Global and Local Discourses,* Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015, 5–11.

[38] Hoffmann, op. cit., 96. For more detailed discussions of this shift in music aesthetics around 1800, see any of the following sources: Bowie, op. cit. and *Aesthetics and Subjec-*

Against this aesthetic, philosophical, and ideological backdrop, one would expect C. P. E. Bach's music and especially his "free", radically expressive fantasias to fare rather well in their critical reception – and in his lifetime they indeed did, but, as we know, not for much longer after his death in 1788, even though the reign of "free" expression as the paradigm of all music aesthetics intensified, if anything, after 1800. The question is: why? In answering, I would point to two distinct tendencies in early to mid 19th-century music criticism: the hostility to the fantasia as a genre and to improvisation in general, coupled with a revalorization of "old", venerable genres such as the sonata and compositional procedures such as the sonata form. Thus, for instance, Henri Blanchard, a leading early to mid 19th-century French critic, dismissed the fantasia as one of the genres that "have for so long corrupted and perverted musical taste and style".[39] Other critics writing for the same journal, the *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris,* France's premier music journal, likewise routinely disqualified the fantasia as "this bastard genre of music".[40] Similar sentiments could be found in leading German music journals, too, for instance, in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, where Henri Hoertel condemned the fantasia as the "scourge of art",[41] while an unsigned reviewer in 1841 lamented that "fantasias are in abundance", unlike "dignified forms" such as sonatas.[42]

More generally, the art of improvisation, which informed much of C. P. E. Bach's music, not just his keyboard fantasias, was no less frowned upon in early to mid 19th-century music criticism. In fact, some of these critics reserved their harshest words for improvisation. An indispensable trade in the 18th century for revered German keyboard virtuosi such as C. P. E. Bach himself and his father, along with his venerable older German models such as Dietrich Buxtehude, Georg Böhm, and Johann Adam Reincken, not to mention Mozart and Beethoven, by the 1830s improvisation had become suspect, as a mere vehicle for self-display of "empty" virtuosity with no musical struc-

tivity: From Kant to Nietzsche, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2003 and Wayne Bowman, *Philosophical Perspectives on Music*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998.

39 Henri Blanchard, "Revue critique. Sonate de Sigismond Thalberg", *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, 8 March 1846, 77.

40 [Unsigned], "Revie critique. Deuxième caprice pour le piano sur la Folle de Grisar, par Henri Herz, op. 83", *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris,* 27 March 1836, 101.

41 Harry Hoertel, "Baillot", *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 26 October 1842, 841–849.

42 [Unsigned], "Recensionen. Kompositionen für Pianoforte. F. Kalkbrenner", *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 2 February 1841, 95.

ture or "musical logic" to justify it. By contrast, as Morrow has demonstrated, not only was Emanuel Bach in his lifetime not criticized for pursuing improvisation, rather, he was celebrated for it. But for C. P. E. Bach and his contemporaries, and for 18th-century music aesthetics in general, music was still inseparable from musical performance, from sound, which meant that performance could easily inform composition the way it did in Emanuel Bach's fantasias. But this was not so for most 19th-century critics. Thus we find even otherwise lionized figures such as Liszt and Hummel upbraided merely for including improvised items in their concert appearances. A reviewer of an 1828 recital by Hummel for the *Revue musicale* thus writes that "we must deplore the usage of improvisation by pianists today and the error in which they fall more or less voluntarily".[43] Similarly, "E. F.", probably Édouard Fétis, son of major French music critic François-Joseph Fétis and an important French critic in his own right, exhorts Liszt in an 1829 concert review not to "haunt us with your endless improvisations!".[44]

Why was improvisation, for so long a staple and arguably the main attraction of public concerts and public music-making in general, so roundly condemned by early to mid 19th-century critics, so much so that after 1850 it was all but phased out of most public concerts? A major, if not *the* major, reason was the radical change that happened in the aesthetic and, more broadly, philosophic conceptualization of music around 1800, between the aesthetic and philosophy of the Enlightenment, represented by Kant, Sulzer, and other figures mentioned above, and, a mere decade or so later, the aesthetic and philosophy of early Romanticism championed by E. T. A. Hoffmann, likewise cited above, as well as Schelling, Schopenhauer, and other major thinkers, for the most part German. As shown in a large number of studies, one of them my own,[45] in much more detail than the limited scope of this paper allows, this paradigm shift saw a re-conceptualization of music from an irreducibly sensuous art, inseparable from and synonymous with its sonic medium – sound – as discussed and dismissed as a merely "agreeable art" by Kant in his *Critique of Judgement*, or subordinated to poetry by Hegel in his *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics* on account of its reliance on a sensuous medium

[43] [Unsigned], "Nouvelles étrangères, Berlin, 29 mars", *Revue musicale,* April 1828, 262.

[44] E. F., "Nouvelles de Paris. Soirée musicale donnée par M. Oury, dans les salons de M. Dietz, le mardi 15 décembre", *Revue musicale,* 18 December 1829, 496.

[45] Cvejić, *The Virtuoso as Subject*, op. cit., 42–92 and the aforementioned studies by Andrew Bowie.

(i.e. sound),[46] to a radically disembodied, abstract, and intellectual art, entirely independent from its merely corporeal and dispensable manifestation in sound, e.g. E. T. A. Hoffmann's "most romantic of the arts" or Schelling's "primal rhythm of nature and of the universe itself"[47] and "an emanation from the Absolute itself". Schopenhauer would even assert that music "could to a certain extent exist if there was no world at all".[48]

Concomitantly with the roughly simultaneous rise of the work concept in music, as was most compellingly demonstrated by Lydia Goehr,[49] this de-sensualisation of music in European aesthetics and philosophy around 1800 also imposed a devaluation of all musical performance in favour of composition, which is likewise pervasive in much of European 19th-century music criticism.[50] Critics thus routinely asserted their "total want of enthusiasm about *mere* performance".[51] For instance, James William Davison, for many years editor-in-chief of *The Musical World*, Britain's leading music periodical, asserted in one of his reviews that music is "something viewless and incorporeal", "not the *sound* of instruments or voices", but a "system of ideality which, as pure emanation of mind, is rendered generally demonstrable by the appliances of mechanism, it matters not whether vocal or instrumental" and, as such, "may be created and remain in being without the help of playing of any kind".[52] It is clear that all of this left little, if any, room for musical improvisation, a main building block of C. P. E. Bach's music, especially his fantasias and other compositionally daring works he wrote: as a type of composition irredeemably meshed with performance and, more broadly, sound, spawning not timeless works frozen in notation but ephemeral, one-off performative events, improvisation was essentially incompatible with the new aesthetic of music and its hierarchies around 1800, and that included, I would argue,

46 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, London, Penguin, 1993, 94–95.

47 Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *Philosophy of Art,* Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1989, 17.

48 Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, New York, Dover Publications, 1969, I, 257.

49 Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*, Oxford, Clarendon Press and Oxford University Press, 1992.

50 See my discussion in *The Virtuoso as Subject*, op. cit., 100–106.

51 [Unsigned], "Dreyschock", *The Musical World*, 18 May 1843, 172.

52 [Unsigned], "Liszt's Pianoforte Recitals", *The Musical World*, 11 June 1840, 361.

much of C. P. E. Bach's music, especially his fantasias and the rest of his core repertory of music intended for *Kenner*.

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As I argued elsewhere,[53] this hostility in early to mid 19th-century European music criticism to improvisation and the fantasia as a fashionable genre of virtuosic keyboard music could be seen as part of a larger critical backlash against instrumental virtuosity, discussed by a number of scholars, most notably Dana Gooley and Jim Samson, among others.[54] While he died in 1788, two or three decades before this backlash began in earnest, itself largely fuelled by the radical change in the conception of music in European aesthetics and philosophy around 1800, described above, C. P. E. Bach was, of course, not only a well-respected composer in his day, but also one of the most renowned keyboard virtuosi of his time, with virtuosic performance, especially improvisation, as shown by Bosworth Powers and other C. P. E. Bach scholars, crucially informing much of his work as a composer, especially his 19 "free" improvisatory keyboard fantasias, the only works he wrote for himself, without restraining his inspiration. With all of that and the foregoing discussion in mind, there is a strong case to be made, as I tried to do in this paper, that C. P. E. Bach was marginalized in his posthumous reception not only due to the increasingly overwhelming stature of his father in Western 19th-century historiography of music, but at least to a significant degree also due to the radical shift in the aesthetic and philosophical conception of music from a sensuous art of representation to an abstract and intellectual art of expression. Due to the combined impact of his father's overbearing legacy and his own commitment to an earlier model of composition, grounded in improvisation and virtuosity, that is, more broadly, performance, it seems as if not even Emanuel Bach's fame in his lifetime and pursuit of free expression in his most avant-garde music could have saved him from oblivion only a few decades later.

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53 Cvejić, *The Virtuoso as Subject*, op. cit.

54 See Dana Gooley, *The Virtuoso Liszt*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004 and Jim Samson, *Virtuosity and the Musical Work: The Transcendental Studies of Liszt*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

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Summary

In his posthumous critical reception, starting almost immediately upon his death in 1788, C. P. E. Bach suffered a spectacular fall from grace, from an "original genius" and the most renowned member of his esteemed musical family, one of Germany's leading composers, to an "almost great composer" and a "minor transitory figure", a "missing link" between the greatness of his father and that of Haydn and Mozart. Most C. P. E. Bach scholars have attributed this to the long shadow cast by his father and the urge of 19th- and 20th-century music historiography to periodize Europe's musical past around "great men" such as J. S. Bach, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. But other reasons may lie in the sheer stylistic idiosyncrasy of C. P. E. Bach's music, especially his 19 "free" improvisatory keyboard fantasias and other works he wrote *für Kenner* or connoisseurs, not the general public and music market, which condemned later composers such as Chopin in their own critical reception, as well as the paradigm shift that occurred in European music aesthetics and philosophy around 1800, whereby music was reconceived as a radically abstract, intellectual, and disembodied art of expression, as opposed to the Enlightenment notion of music as an irreducibly sensuous, that is, sonic art of representation or mimesis. This shift caused a devaluation of musical performance in general and particularly of improvisation in European early to mid 19th-century music criticism, which in turn arguably made C. P. E. Bach's music, rooted in performance and especially in improvisation, incompatible with the new philosophical, aesthetic, and ideological paradigm of music. Another important factor in C. P. E. Bach's posthumous fall from grace may have been his focus on the genre of keyboard fantasia, another favourite target of censure for most major European music critics of the early to mid 19th century. All of these factor may help explain why C. P. E. Bach's music was so quickly marginalized in the 19th century, despite its pursuit of "free" expression, itself a defining feature of Romanticist music aesthetics.