

THE CONCERTED SYMPHONIES  
OF  
JOHN CHRISTIAN BACH

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Three Symphonies in Score



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## THE CONCERTED SYMPHONIES OF JOHN CHRISTIAN BACH

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Three Symphonies in Score

Edited by  
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## PREFACE

Only two of John Christian Bach's fifteen concerted symphonies have appeared in modern score. In 1934, Eulenburg published, as No. 765 of its *Minature Score Edition*, Bach's "Sinfonia concertante" in A Major for solo violin and violoncello, edited by the late Alfred Einstein. During the succeeding year, Dr. Fritz Wilhelm Stein completed an edition of the "Sinfonia concertante" in E<sup>b</sup> Major for two solo violins, similarly published by Eulenburg as No. 768. The present edition of three of Bach's concerted symphonies thus brings to five the total number available today in modern score form.

The second of the present three, a Concerted Symphony in G Major for two solo violins and violoncello, now completes the modern editions of that group of concerted symphonies which were published during John Christian Bach's lifetime, *viz.*, the above mentioned A Major "concertante," published by Jean George Sieber in Paris; the E<sup>b</sup> Major "concertante," by Johann Julius Hummel in Amsterdam; and, the last named G Major "concertante," by Roullède de la Chevardière, also in Paris.

The appearance of these works in contemporary sets of printed orchestral parts provides an indication of their probable dates of composition and, together with other factors, indirectly suggests the general bounds within which the remaining twelve unpublished concerted symphonies very likely fall. Einstein states that the A Major concerted symphony was in all probability published shortly after Sieber's founding of a music publishing house in Paris in 1771.<sup>1</sup> Fritz Stein fixes the date of the E<sup>b</sup> Major concerted symphony, for "inner reasons," about 1770.<sup>2</sup> This date, however, would appear somewhat early, for, according to the catalogue of The King's Music Library at the British Museum, the Hummel edition, bearing the plate number 327, is assigned to the year 1773-74.<sup>3</sup>

Chevardière's publication of the G Major concerted symphony also appears to stem from this general period, or at any rate not later than 1775, since, at that time, Chevardière's publisher's title is reported to have been transferred to his successor, Pierre Leduc.<sup>4</sup> The earliest date of publication would fall in 1761, the year Chevardière became active in the field of music printing. Fortunately, however, through the contents of the newly discovered Mantua MS., the span of fifteen years may be confidently narrowed to five. The set of orchestral parts to the G Major concerted symphony contained in this source is definitely proven to have been copied either directly from the Chev-

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<sup>1</sup>Alfred Einstein, "Johann Christian Bach / Sinfonia concertante / A Major" (Edition Eulenburg, No. 765). In the "Foreward" of this edition, Einstein also points to the year 1790, or shortly thereafter, as the date of a second issue of the same "Sinfonia concertante," this time by Nikolaus Simrock, who, having taken over Sieber's plates, replaces Sieber's publisher's title by a pasted slip ("Chez N. Simrock à Bonn").

<sup>2</sup>Fritz Stein, "Johann Christian Bach / Sinfonia concertante / E<sup>b</sup> Major" (Edition Eulenburg, No. 768).

<sup>3</sup>William Barclay Squire, *Catalogue of the King's Music Library* (London: B. Quaritch, Ltd., 1929), III, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup>Hugo Riemann, "La Chevardière," *Musik Lexikon*, ed. by Alfred Einstein (11th. ed.; Max Hesses, 1929), I, p. 305.

ardière edition, or from a middle, unknown source exceedingly close to it.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the orchestral parts to three of the accompanying six symphonies, which together form the largest portion of the MS., are doubtless copies of printed sets of orchestral parts selected from editions appearing in 1770, or shortly thereafter. Two of the symphonies, both in D Major, are carried as Nos. 1 and 2 of William Randell's edition of John Christian Bach's "Six Favourite Overtures in VIII Parts . . . ." and may be assigned to the year 1770.<sup>2</sup> The remaining symphony, in E<sup>b</sup> Major, appears as No. 1 of S. Markordt's (Amsterdam) edition of "Six Simphonie périodique [*sic*] à 8 Instruments . . . . Op. 8,"<sup>3</sup> dating from 1770-75,<sup>4</sup> and as No. 3 of Hummel's edition of "Six Simphonies à Deux Violons . . . . Op. 6," dating from 1770.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the manuscript copy of the G Major concerted symphony, accompanied by similar manuscript copies of these three symphonies, whose dates of origin can be traced through their printed counterparts, suggest that the Chevardière edition parallels in time those of the above mentioned Randell, Markordt, and Hummel publications. If this assumption is correct, then Bach's concerted symphony in G Major may be definitely assigned to the general period of 1770-75.

Indeed, it is entirely possible that other concerted symphonies stem from this period as well, if not from the first half of the seventh decade, then certainly from the period of Bach's tenure in England. The numerous publications of his symphonies, beginning with Op. 3 shortly after his arrival in London, reveal an ever increasing preoccupation with instrumental music. Presumably these, together with the harpsichord and pianoforte concertos, instrumental trios, quartets, and quintets, were composed specifically for the famous series of concerts known as the "Bach-Abel Concerts," begun in January, 1765. Presumably, too, for these concerts, Bach also turned to the concerted symphony, for it is not unreasonable to assume a public interest in this specific genre parallel to that revealed concurrently in the Parisian "Concert spirituel."<sup>6</sup>

The concerted symphonies of John Christian Bach forming the present edition have been selected not only for their intrinsic musical value, but also because they illustrate, in their varying relationships, the growth of Bach's concerto-form from an earlier quasi-ritornello procedure to the "concerto-form" of the young Mozart, and as Einstein points out in the preface to the A Major "Sinfonia concertante," because they provide "early forerunners of the form which Beethoven with his Triple-Concerto, and Brahms with his Double-Concerto, brought to maturity."

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<sup>1</sup>*Infra*, pp. 222ff.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Sanford Terry, *John Christian Bach* (London: Oxford University Press, 1929), p. 272.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 266.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 264.

<sup>6</sup>Michel Brenet, *Les concerts en France sous l'ancien regime* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1900).