

ABSTRACT

WHICH BACH WROTE WHAT?
A CUMULATIVE APPROACH TO CLARIFICATION OF THREE DISPUTED WORKS

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This dissertation addresses the authorship of three compositions that have been attributed to different members of the Bach family. The disputed pieces are two concertos for keyboard and string orchestra, and a sextet for keyboard, oboe, violin, cello, and two horns. The concertos have been attributed to Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714–88), Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach (1732–95), and Johann Christian Bach (1735–82). The sources for the sextet have prompted attributions to Johann Christoph Friedrich and to Johann Christian.

The musical sources for these pieces are subjected to standard musicological and philological methods for determining provenance and authorship: watermark analysis, stemmatic filiation, handwriting analysis, observations about size and format. These methods yield no conclusive identification of the composers. An examination of the published literature devoted to or touching upon these pieces shows that very little original work has been done to resolve the conflicting attributions. Stylistic and formal characteristics of the keyboard concerto in north Germany in the middle of the eighteenth century demonstrate that the disputed concertos fit into a tradition practiced by both Carl Philipp Emanuel and Johann Christian during the first half of the 1750s. No directly comparable concerto by Johann Christoph Friedrich has survived. A similar

review of large-scale keyboard chamber music is unable to rule out either Johann Christoph Friedrich or Johann Christian as the composer of the sextet.

The traditional methods of resolving conflicting attributions having been exhausted, specific characteristics of the disputed pieces are statistically compared with the same characteristics from a control group of compositions with undisputed attributions. Computer routines to accomplish the tedious task of tabulating the characteristics were written specifically for this study. Commercial programs for musical notation, database management, and statistical analysis were also employed.

The cumulative results from all of the methods indicate that the two concertos were probably written by Carl Philipp Emanuel and the sextet by Johann Christian Bach.