

WIGMORE HALL

Monday 19 October 2026
7.30pm

Mahan Esfahani harpsichord
Aapo Häkkinen fortepiano
Helsinki Baroque Orchestra

Pauliina Fred flute	Aira Maria Lehtipuu violin I	Hanna Pakkala viola
Ilkka Eronen flute	Irma Niskanen violin I	Saara Kurki viola
Krzysztof Stencel horn	Minna Kangas violin II	Riitta-Liisa Ristiluoma viola
Dániel Pálkövi horn	Anssi Koskela violin II	Heidi Peltoniemi cello
Ilia Korol violin I	Anthony Marini violin II	Jussi Seppänen cello
Anni Elonen violin I	Hanna Pesonen violin II	Anna Rinta-Rahko double bass

Carl Philipp Emanuel
Bach (1714-1788)

Symphony in F Wq. 175 (1755)
I. Allegro assai • II. Andante • III. Tempo di Minuetto

Concerto in E minor for harpsichord Wq. 15 (1745-7)
I. Allegro • II. Adagio • III. Vivace

Symphony in E minor Wq. 178 (1756)
I. Allegro assai • II. Andante moderato • III. Allegro

Interval

Symphony in A Wq. 182/4 (1773)
I. Allegro ma non troppo • II. Largo ed innocentamente • III. Allegro assai

Concerto in E flat for harpsichord and fortepiano Wq. 47 (1788)
I. Allegro molto • II. Larghetto • III. Presto



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A Few Remarks

As with his father's career, CPE Bach treaded a path made difficult by being a composer somewhat out of step with the popular aesthetic trends of his era. Much has been made of his time as a musician at the court of Frederick the Great, but it is important to remember that Emanuel's style was relatively under-appreciated by his royal patron in contrast to works by those who wrote in a light and ingratiating style more congenial to Prussian courtly tastes. Nonetheless, Emanuel Bach's orchestral music in particular occupied a rarefied space, acquiring a reputation for being highly learned while earning the admiration of elite audiences for its heightened dramatic sense.

Two of the symphonies on this programme date from Bach's time in Berlin (1740-68). The **F major Symphony Wq. 175** and the **E minor Wq. 178** both date from the mid-1750s, with the latter's material originating in an E minor String Symphony (Wq. 177) which was the only one of the Berlin symphonies to be published during CPE Bach's lifetime (1756). The three-movement structure of the F major Symphony concluding in a courtly dance – in this case, a *Minuetto* – is clearly derived from the Italian operatic *sinfonia* style cultivated by Hasse and others in Dresden which made its way to Berlin through the royal Opernhaus on the Unter den Linden. The material for the E minor Symphony, on the other hand, is rather more provocatively abstract and virtuosic.

Bach's move to Hamburg in 1768 in order to take up the position as municipal music director occasioned contact with leading financial and mercantile families of who as a class also bought a huge amount of contemporary keyboard and chamber music. Amongst the patrons that called upon Bach was the famous Viennese diplomat and man of letters Gottfried van Swieten, who had known Bach during his time in Berlin. In his commissioning letter he requested that 'the composer's creative imagination might have free rein, unfettered by any regard for technical difficulties'. The **A major Symphony Wq. 182/4** is from the resultant six symphonies for four-part strings produced by Emanuel Bach and dedicated to van Swieten in 1773. Likewise, Hamburg's economic power coupled with access to greater resources allowed Bach to expand on an orchestral palate that he had only treated sporadically whilst in Berlin. This is likely the time that he added the wind and horn parts to Wq. 177/178, which he then republished.

With the waning of the brilliant court establishment at Potsdam brought on by various wars, private patrons in Berlin took on the employment of idle musicians. One of the central families responsible for establishing Berlin as a centre for music pushing the boundaries of refinement was the community around the 18th-century Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, with whom a number of Berlin's highly cultivated Jewish families intermarried. In the second generation of this clan, there were four remarkable women of the Itzig family – Sara

(Levy), Bella (Salomon), Zippora (Wulff) and Fanny (von Arnstein) – who contributed to the preservation of the works of JS Bach and the patronage of CPE Bach mainly in the commissioning of works for use within the context of weekly salons and reading societies. During these semi-public events, the Jewish hostesses of Berlin served tea, discussed the aesthetic and social issues of the day and performed music. That the younger Bach continued to be patronised (by a family to whom he was a keyboard teacher during his Berlin years) decades after moving to his new home is a testament to the lasting appreciation he enjoyed from the *cognoscenti*.

In negotiating their liberated presence both as Jews and as women within a changing society, the female members of Berlin's intellectual circles positioned their corner of the *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment) as an expression of cultural prowess with an aim to signalling social integration. For a variety of reasons not least influenced by Moses Mendelssohn's own commentary on the sublime, only instrumental music was performed at these salons. Indeed, as the paragon of the Berlin *Haskalah* Rachel Verhagen – herself an avid reader of Mendelssohn's works – remarked in one of her countless letters, 'Sebastian [Bach], I have long been saying, is entirely Kant: with great poetic talent, fantasy; a great architect of prime proportions; a pure soul.... To me, it is clear that vocal music is not, and cannot, be so pure, so heavenly, so sublime, as instrumental music.'

CPE Bach's **Double Concerto in E flat (Wq. 47)**, written in the last year of his life for the use of Sara Levy and her sister Zippora at the two keyboards, demonstrates the direct impact of a patron's ideals on the compositional structure of a work. Rebecca Cypess has convincingly argued that the use of two solo instruments with individual timbres manifests Mendelssohn's principle of *Einheit in der Mannigfaltigkeit* (unity within diversity), an aesthetic concept equally applied throughout his various essays on political topics as an embedded argument in favour of the assimilation of Jews to Prussian society. Equally significant is the positioning of the 'old' harpsichord alongside the 'new' piano as a representation of the harmonious co-existence between the peoples of the Old and New Testaments. Appreciated in this light, the Concerto is a sonic counterpart to Sara Levy's frequent remark on Mendelssohn's dictum of Judaism as the foundation of Christianity that she should not be required to 'break down the basement in order to live on the first floor'. Bach's calling upon the special resources of each instrument – the sparkling brilliance of the harpsichord and the chiaroscuro lyricism of the early piano, each with their own themes and motifs – indeed demonstrates a central characteristic of pre-Napoleonic progressive thought, wherein new ideas derive their potency from the felicitous synthesis of ideas rather than from unnecessarily destructive struggle.

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