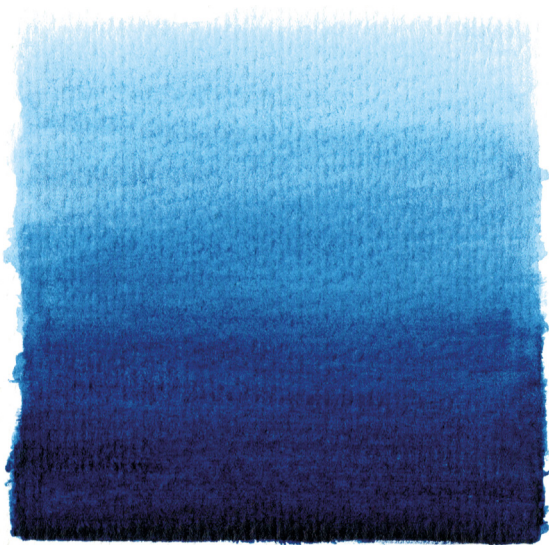


PRUSSIAN BLUE

CPE BACH SONATAS

FOR FLUTE, VIOLA DA GAMBA & HARPSICHORD



PASSACAGLIA

'A musician moves others only if he himself is moved: it is essential that he experience all of the moods that he wants to arouse in his listeners, because in such a way he will make them understand his sentiments and participate in his emotion.'

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach

Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen (1753)

These are the emotive words of an artist in search of new ways to express matters of the human soul. Determined to challenge musical conventions of the past, CPE Bach (known as 'Emanuel') was arguably the bravest and most experimental of a new generation of composers to emerge from the shadow of his father, Johann Sebastian; standing out as a composer of unique skill and originality, he was described by Charles Burney in 1775 as 'one of the greatest composers that ever existed'.

Both intellectual and sensitive, as a student, in Leipzig and Frankfurt an der Oder, Emanuel was surrounded by an impressive and influential circle of Enlightenment thinkers. Amongst them were the great flautist and writer JJ Quantz (tutor to Frederick the Great), the musical theorists FW Marpurg and

J Mattheson, as well as the writer and philosopher GE Lessing. Musically speaking, for Emanuel, the culturally 'enlightened' ideas in circulation translated as a quest for *galant* simplicity and balance on the one hand but, crucially, a feeling for the more emotive *Empfindsamkeit* (sensitivity) on the other. The musical writings of theorists such as Mattheson also highlighted the expressive possibilities to be found in the ancient principles of drama and rhetoric - a line of investigation that Emanuel Bach was to explore fully during the course of his lifetime. Indeed, Burney declared that Emanuel's music could be 'fantastical and far-fetched', but that 'his flights are not the wild ravings of ignorance or madness, but the effusions of cultivated genius'. (C Burney: *The Present State of Music in Germany, The Netherlands and United Provinces*, 1775)

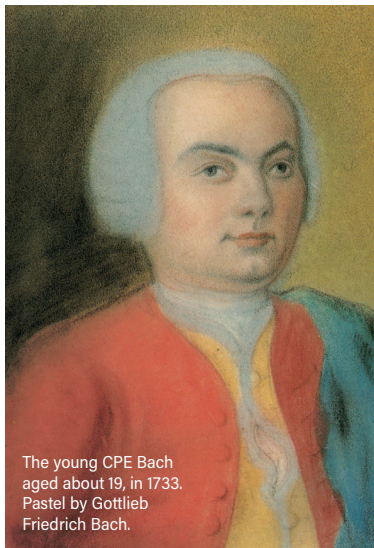
Having grown up amongst his father's musicians, Emanuel was no doubt familiar with the sensibilities of the flute from a young age. He would have known many of the finest instrumentalists at the famous Dresden court, including the flautists Quantz and Buffardin, long before his arrival at the Prussian court in 1738. However, it was almost certainly King Frederick the Great's obsession with the instrument, along with a more general vogue for it in royal circles, which became the main impetus for Emanuel's writing for it during his Berlin years.

All the sonatas presented on this recording were composed in the earlier years of Emanuel's musical life, and as such provide a glimpse into the composer's youthful spirit and distinctively emerging musical voice. The earliest of them, the **Sonata in E minor for flute and basso continuo** Wq 124 (1737), dates from Emanuel's time as a student in Frankfurt an der Oder, where he directed his own *Collegium Musicum*, using local musicians and students as performers. The opening movement of this sonata in particular is a wonderful early example of Bach's emotionally charged, restless, dramatic

style, surprising the listener at every turn with exciting and unexpected melodic and harmonic twists.

The **Sonata in B flat for flute and basso continuo** Wq 125 (1738) was composed in the earliest years of Emanuel's employment for Crown Prince Frederick in Berlin. It is a calm and elegant work, and like all the pieces explored on this disc demands the players find a special nuance and direction for every phrase. Emanuel is constantly shifting the musical material in a sort of musical 'stream of consciousness', allowing his ideas to unfold in fresh and impulsive ways. However, the over-arching form of the work is tightly controlled within a tested three-movement formula, slow-fast-fast, with elegance consistently prized above virtuoso display. This same framework is employed for almost all his earlier solo sonatas, though each piece retains its own distinct character.

In the **Sonata in D major for flute and basso continuo** Wq 131 (1747), also written in Berlin, a beautiful, reflective Andante gives way to a good natured, even cheeky Allegretto, and a similarly capricious final Allegro. This is Emanuel Bach at his most agreeable.



The young CPE Bach
aged about 19, in 1733.
Pastel by Gottlieb
Friedrich Bach.

Chronologically, the last flute work on this disc is the **Sonata in A minor for unaccompanied flute** Wq 132 (1747). This is the first example of a solo sonata in flute literature, no doubt inspired by the monumental solo Partita of Emanuel's father, Johann Sebastian, but occupying an utterly different and rather darker musical sphere. The capricious twists and turns hinted at in the earlier sonatas

are more fully explored in this highly expressive piece, demanding huge flexibility of the flautist in terms of tonal agility and musical imagination. The large leaps and slurs, as well as the extreme dynamic markings, are unprecedented in flute music before this date and also make high demands of the one-keyed instrument's practical capacity at this time. Perhaps the awareness of the physicality, for the performer, in this piece, is all part of Emanuel's plan; the player is required to take on an emotional, intellectual and technical journey as well as communicate a meaningful narrative to the listener. Although we do not know exactly for whom the piece was written, we do know that decades later, in 1783, Bach responded to a performance of (what is assumed to be) this work by the celebrated 14-year-old flute virtuoso Friedrich Dülön, and commented, 'the one for whom I wrote this piece couldn't play it; the one for whom I did not write it can.'

The six 'Prussian' sonatas for keyboard, along with the slightly later 'Württemberg' set, form a core of CPE Bach's keyboard output that is startlingly progressive given its early 1740s date. The **Sonata in C minor** Wq 48/4 in particular continually explores jarring contrasts of texture, tone

and harmony; the first movement feels almost fragmented at times, excitingly so, with a range of expressive colour that is almost orchestral. The Presto finale meanwhile is a sort of *sturm und drang* two-part invention, straddling baroque and classical style and technique. However, the greatest density of *f[orte]* and *p[iano]* markings are found in the rather lovely second movement Adagio, by turns fragile and sumptuous. Effective and idiomatic for a double-manual harpsichord (as used in this recording) this also hints at a more overt classical aesthetic, and performance on Emanuel's beloved clavichord, or the piano. Though, as with JS Bach, the quality of the material to a large extent transcends the specific choice of instrument.

The **Sonata for viola da gamba and basso continuo in C major** Wq 136 (1745) was probably written for the viol virtuoso Ludwig Christian Hesse, a court musician at the Berlin court. By this time, the instrument had fallen out of general use and was rarely played outside German court circles, but Hesse's French playing style was appreciated by the King. The two gamba sonatas by Emanuel mark both a height of technical and musical demand for the instrument, as well as

being amongst the last works written for it in the 18th century. The C major sonata is a playful and galant work, extended in form compared to the flute sonatas, but offering a chance for virtuosity and expression. The final Arioso uses some of the same motivic material as Wq 125, largely re-worked but sharing the same light, *galant* flavour.

© Annabel Knight



Robin Bigwood

Passacaglia

For many years the baroque ensemble Passacaglia has been acclaimed for its engaging and charismatic performances of seventeenth and eighteenth-century chamber music, featuring the unique sound of recorders, flutes, violin, viola da gamba and harpsichord.

Featuring some of the UK's leading period instrument players, the ensemble has appeared at London's Wigmore Hall and Southbank and has toured in the British Isles, Europe, Scandinavia, Ireland and America. They have featured on numerous BBC and worldwide radio broadcasts and have recorded albums for Linn Records, Naxos and BCR.

'A performance of irrepressible joy'
Gramophone

'Each a superb musician, they form a tight, sensitive ensemble that plays with great passion'
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Annabel Knight has established a successful performing and teaching career as a recorder player and historical flautist, which has taken her across the UK, Europe, America and the Middle East

as a chamber musician and freelance artist. As well as working with early music ensembles including Passacaglia and the recorder ensemble Fontanella, she also enjoys exploring contemporary projects including performing with the band Art of Moog on an electronic wind synthesizer. Annabel is also a committed educationalist; she is the founder and director of the Woodhouse Recorder Courses in the UK and teaches recorder and baroque flute at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire.

Reiko Ichise was born in Tokyo and read Musicology at Kunitachi College of Music and subsequently at the Royal College of Music in London, where she is now a professor. She has established herself as one of the leading gamba players in the UK. As a soloist, she has performed with many leading orchestras including Academy of Ancient Music, Gabrieli Consort, English Baroque Soloists, Arte dei suonatori, London Philharmonic Orchestra and Hallé Orchestra, appearing in many international festivals. Reiko is in great demand as a chamber musician, a member of prestigious ensembles such as Florilegium and the Bach Players, and for 9 years from 2008 was a member of

the award-winning Fretwork, with whom she had the privilege of performing consort music both old and new.

Robin Bigwood enjoys a career combining solo work, chamber music accompaniment and orchestral continuo, on harpsichord and other keyboard instruments. He is a member of La Serenissima and Feinstein Ensemble and has worked with many other period instrument orchestras and ensembles. Robin teaches harpsichord and continuo at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and is also active in the field of recording and music technology: he recorded and edited this album, founded the label Barn Cottage Records, and is a regular author for *Sound on Sound* magazine. He also directs Art of Moog, which performs the music of JS Bach live on synthesizers.

Instruments

Baroque flute after C Palanca c. 1750 (2018) by Martin Wenner

7-stringed bass viol after G Barbey, Paris 1720 (1986), by David Rubio

Double-manual harpsichord after Goermans/Taskin 1764/1783 (1993) by Alan Gotto



Photo credits

Matthew Bigwood (digipak inner and booklet page 5)
David Shoukry (booklet rear)
Robin Bigwood (booklet above)

'It seems to me that music primarily must touch the heart.'

CPE Bach, Autobiography (1773)

