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Introduction

The Composer

This piece is attributed to “J. P. Bach” in its unique source, a manuscript score held by the Riemenschneider Bach Institute at Baldwin Wallace University in Berea, Ohio (see plate 1). Among the large number of Bach family musicians, many of whom were called Johann, only one had a middle name beginning with the letter *P*, namely Johann Philipp Bach (1752–1846).¹ As the last surviving member of a musical dynasty that originated in the sixteenth century, J. P. Bach reached the age of ninety-four and outlived many famous composers of the Romantic era, such as Weber, Beethoven, Schubert, Bellini, and Paganini.

Like his father and grandfather, J. P. Bach served at the court in Meiningen, Germany. This town was the capital of the duchy of Saxe-Meiningen in the southern part of Thuringia. It is located about thirty miles south of Eisenach, birthplace of the most celebrated member of the family, Johann Sebastian Bach. J. S. Bach was a cousin of J. P. Bach’s grandfather, Johann Ludwig Bach (1677–1731), who held the position of kapellmeister in Meiningen. In Leipzig in 1726, J. S. Bach performed eighteen church cantatas by J. L. Bach, including *Denn du wirst meine Seele nicht in der Hölle lassen*, BWV 15, formerly attributed to J. S. Bach himself.

J. P. Bach is best known as a visual artist, especially for his pastels, many of which have been preserved.² These include a famous portrait of his godfather, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, J. S. Bach’s second son.³ Although he held the post of organist as well as painter for the dukes in Meiningen, as had his father, Gottlieb Friedrich Bach (1714–85), until now J. P. Bach’s music has been completely unknown.

The Music and Text

Because there are no other music manuscripts attributed to J. P. Bach, comparative studies of its notation for the purposes of authentication cannot be undertaken. Some samples of J. P. Bach’s handwriting do exist in other documents, however, and they do not match the script in this source.⁴ Although the manuscript evidently was penned by someone other than the composer, its unambiguous attribution attests to the fact that the anonymous scribe, at least, considered this piece to have been a genuine composition by J. P. Bach. A wealth of additional evidence suggests that this work is indeed the only known composition by the last professional musician in the long line of Bach family members.⁵ It is therefore of considerable historical importance.

Like J. S. Bach’s famous Goldberg variations, the *Aria scotese con variazzone* varies an “aria” in binary form, albeit in a much simpler musical style throughout.

“Aria scotese” is an anglicization of the standard Italian “Aria scozzese.” The Scottish air that serves as the theme for this set of variations is a traditional tune, identified as “Lovely Nancy” on the wrapper (see plate 2). The many guises of this very popular melody have been catalogued since the nineteenth century.⁶ One of its earliest appearances in print was under the title “Strephon’s Complaint” in *Calliope, or, English Harmony: A Collection of the Most Celebrated English and Scots Songs* (London, 1739), where its five stanzas express the travails of a lovesick lover:

How can you lovely Nancy thus cruelly slight
A Swain who is wretched when banish’d your Sight,
Who for your sake alone, thinks Life worth his Care,
But which soon if you frown on must end in Despair.

If you meant thus to torture O why did your Eyes,
Once express so much softness & sweetly surprize

Aria scotese con variazione

Andante
p sempre

Violoncello

Harpisichord

5

11 Var. 1

17 *sostenuto*

The musical score is written for Cello and Harpsichord. It begins with a C-clef for the Cello and a grand staff for the Harpsichord. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked 'Andante' and the dynamics are 'p sempre'. The score is divided into four systems. The first system (measures 1-4) shows the Cello playing a melodic line and the Harpsichord providing harmonic support. The second system (measures 5-10) includes a repeat sign. The third system (measures 11-16) is marked 'Var. 1'. The fourth system (measures 17-20) is marked 'sostenuto'.

101 *1.* *2.* Var. 6 *tr*

Musical score for measures 101-103. The piece is in 9/8 time. Measure 101 has a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.). Measure 102 is labeled 'Var. 6' and contains a trill (tr). Measure 103 also contains a trill (tr). The score is written for bass, treble, and grand staves.

104 *tr* *tr* *tr*

Musical score for measures 104-106. The piece is in 9/8 time. Measure 104 has a trill (tr). Measure 105 has a trill (tr). Measure 106 has a trill (tr). The score is written for bass, treble, and grand staves.

107 *tr*

Musical score for measures 107-109. The piece is in 9/8 time. Measure 107 has a trill (tr). Measure 108 has a trill (tr). Measure 109 has a trill (tr). The score is written for bass, treble, and grand staves.

110 *1.* *2.* *1.* *2.*

Musical score for measures 110-113. The piece is in 9/8 time. Measure 110 has a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.). Measure 111 has a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.). Measure 112 has a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.). Measure 113 has a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.). The score is written for bass, treble, and grand staves.