FHR REMASTERS

Keyboard Music in the *Empfindsamer* Style

Preethi de Silva *harpsichord & fortepiano*

CPE Bach

Württemberg Sonata No. 6 in B minor, Wq49/6 (H36)
Variations on *Folies d'Espagne*, Wq118/9 (H263)

JG Müthel

Arioso and 12 Variations in G major
Arioso and 12 Variations in C minor

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'Play from the soul, not like a trained bird.'

— CPE Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard instruments*

The keyboard works on this recording illustrate two different aspects of the principle of variation as practiced in the mid-eighteenth century. And, although they differ in form, their common style of subjective expressivity clearly shows a strong link between the two composers CPE Bach (1714–1788) and JG Müthel (1728–1788). Reference to the "great Bach" in the late eighteenth century implied Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach and not Johann Sebastian, his father. Renowned, revered, and respected among his contemporaries as a composer, performer, pedagogue, and theorist, Emanuel Bach has, in the twentieth century, only slowly begun to regain his true stature. Born in Weimar in 1714, he studied philosophy and law, and simultaneously pursued his musical interests. In 1738 he was summoned to join the musicians serving Crown-Prince Frederick of Prussia, and in 1740, on the Prince's accession to the Prussian throne, was formally appointed accompanist at the Berlin court. But, following years of frustration and humiliation in this position, Bach moved on to Hamburg in 1768. There he remained until his death and produced among other works, his last great keyboard works, the six collections of *Keyboard Sonatas and Free Fantasias*, *along with some Rondos for the Fortepiano for Connoisseurs and Amateurs* (1779–87).

It is as a composer for stringed keyboard instruments (ie, clavichord, harpsichord, and fortepiano) and for his great *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments* (Part I, 1753, and Part II, 1762) that Emanuel Bach achieved fame. His works for these instruments include over 150 sonatas, several dozen concertos, numerous fantasias and rondos, and an assortment of short character pieces. In his autobiography of 1773 he wrote, almost regretfully that 'Since I have had to compose most of my works for specific individuals and for the public, I have always been more restrained in them than in the few pieces that I have written merely for myself.' Herein lies the reason Bach composed in three quite different styles. Conservative at first, he turned to a mode of expression highly personal, increasingly dramatic, and at times even imbued with the spirit of the *Sturm und Drang*, the literary movement that reached its zenith in the 1770s. At its most subjective, the "ultra-sensitive" *empfindsamer Stil* is characterized by the moody, the rhapsodic, and the unexpected. In the keyboard music of Bach (whose favourite instrument was the clavichord) it might be considered first an antecedent and then a less 'stormy' parallel phenomenon (not really a true counterpart) to the *Sturm und Drang*. Bach also composed music 'for the public' in the lighter *galant* style. His success as a composer is clearly the result of his ability throughout his career to juxtapose, whenever it suited him, the antithetical elements of several styles, even the 'old-fashioned' polyphony.

In 1742 Bach published his so-called *Six Prussian Sonatas* dedicated to King Frederick, and in 1744 his *Six Württemberg Sonatas*. The light *galant* style of the faster movements of the three-movement *Prussian*

CPE Bach by Franz Conrad Löhr

Sonatas is often contrasted with slow movements embodying the style that Emanuel used when he wrote 'merely' for himself. In the *Württemberg Sonatas* he further confirms this need to explore a personal style. They were dedicated to his sixteen-year-old student in Berlin who, that year, became Duke Carl Eugen of Württemberg and departed for Stuttgart. The technical demands and depth of musical expression here leads one to believe that the young nobleman dedicatee must have had unusual talent. The sixth sonata, the most complex among these three movement works, is in the key of B minor, and has a majestically stirring first movement. Baroque devices are not absent, but contributing to the uniquely expressive style are the alternation between full-voiced chords and a one- or two-part texture in dotted rhythms (as in the *Adagio* of the sixth *Prussian Sonata*) persistently recurring rests, deceptive cadences at *fermate*, sudden dynamic contrasts, and finally, emphatically descending bare octave passages. The published original version of this movement is strongly indicative of the *empfindsame* subjectivity of Bach's later works, especially his fantasias. It became the framework for the almost rhapsodic 'variations' (*Veränderungen*) provided for both reprises in a manuscript that was completed later, and which is considered to be in the hand of an unknown copyist whose work was reviewed by Bach.

'It is indispensable, nowadays to alter repeats. One expects it of everybody,' commented Bach in the preface to his *Sonatas with Varied Repeats* (1760). Earlier, at the end of his *Essay* (Part I, 1753), he referred to 'the present practice' of varying extemporaneously the two reprises of an allegro, and complained of much abuse. The pedagogue Bach, perhaps more than any other composer of that time, was a compulsive reviser of his own works; often, he also composed entire pieces with varied repeats, or provided variations or

embellishments (*Auszierungen*) for existing works.

The slow movement of our sonata is in B major and has a sublimely serene opening. The dominating sighing motive, punctuated by rests and *fermate*, is soon contrasted with a restless scale-passage based on a dotted-note figure. Slightly transformed, this pulsating passage later reappears against repeated octaves in the right hand, and is transposed twice before reaching a climax. In his *Essay*, Bach makes special reference to this slow movement (as he had to the first movement). To enhance the prevailing *affekt*, he directs the performer gradually to increase the tempo at each transposition, and then 'sleepily' to hold it back. Here, the manuscript provides eloquent embellishments for the sparsely ornamented original version, and includes an exquisite cadential flourish at the end.

The bi-partite last movement, back in the minor key, is in a decidedly lighter mood. Intensified by baroque contrapuntal devices, the joyous momentum of running sixteenth-notes is interrupted only three times. In this recording I have added varied repeats, since none by Bach has come to light.

Although Emanuel Bach's influence (as an innovator of pre-classical forms and style) on Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven is generally acknowledged, very little is known of the lesser composers who were touched by his example. Among the latter was the enigmatic Johann Gottfried Müthel.

Considered to have been JS Bach's last pupil, Müthel was little known even in his own time. Yet, he received the highest accolades from the best known writers of music in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, among them Johann Nikolaus Forkel, Charles Burney, Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart, Johann Friedrich Reichardt, and Nicolas Hüllmandel. Schubart, in his *Ideen zu einer Æsthetik der Tonkunst* (completed in 1784), commented, 'His pieces have quite a unique quality — dark, gloomy, with unusual modulation, capricious in passages and unbending to the fashionable taste of his contemporaries.' Burney, who repeatedly performed Müthel's greatest work, the *Duetto in E flat for Two Keyboards*, had earlier written that Müthel's compositions 'are so full of novelty, taste, grace and contrivance, that I should not hesitate to rank them among the greatest productions of the present age,' and that 'The style of this composer more resembles that of Emanuel Bach, than any other.' (*The Present State of Music in Germany...*, 1773). Today, specialists agree that Müthel's music is sufficiently different from that of his contemporaries to merit special attention, but do not seem able to agree whether his capriciously expressive style could be considered a liberalized outgrowth of the era of Enlightenment or a musical counterpart of the *Sturm und Drang*. Whether or not his work belongs to the latter category, he was for his time a rare kind of musician. In a letter to a friend he claimed he could compose only when he was in a 'serene state of mind,' which occurred only seldom — a remark that could hardly have been uttered by his prolific *galant* contemporaries. This accounts for the small size of his oeuvre, most of which was for keyboard. A man of unusual whims, he is reported to have been a stunning but reluctant performer. Fearful of being disturbed by the clattering of horses' hooves from passing carriages, he let himself be heard only in the winter, when deep snow lay on the streets.

Born in Mölln near Lübeck, the son of an organist, Müthel began his musical training very early, and by the age of nineteen was appointed chamber musician

and organist at the court of the Duke of Mecklenburg in Schwerin. His patron encouraged his musical development and in May of 1750 gave him a leave of absence and recommendation to study with JS Bach. Müthel's instructive stay in the composer's home was curtailed after a few weeks, for Bach died in July of that year. Soon after, Müthel travelled to other cities meeting, among others, JA Hasse in Dresden. CPE Bach in Berlin and, finally, Telemann in Hamburg. He must have profited immensely from these encounters and the resulting knowledge of the diverse musical styles of these composers. But, after JS Bach, it is CPE Bach who influenced Müthel most, for the *emfindsamer Stil* is clearly imprinted in his works. (We know that Müthel copied several works by JS Bach, including the *Chromatic Fantasy*, and by CPE Bach, including probably the unpublished *Sonata in B minor, Wq65*.) In 1753 Müthel left Schwerin for Riga (Latvia), where he composed most of his mature works and lived until his death in 1788. Although reclusive in nature, he was possibly the most esteemed musician in the city. At his death, and for two decades before, he held the position of organist at St. Peter's, the principal church in cosmopolitan Riga.

Together with three sonatas, Müthel's two sets of variations performed on this disc were dedicated to his former employer, Privy Councillor Otto Hermann Vietinghoff of Riga, a lavish patron of the arts. They were published in 1756 by Haffner of Nuremberg. The French title specifies the harpsichord, but a large clavichord or a fortepiano appears to be more suitable for all these works, which demand subtle changes in dynamics that are impractical on a harpsichord. Müthel would have been familiar with all three instruments since they are mentioned in the title of his *Duetto* in 1771. The works of 1756 are certainly some of the earliest suitable for performance on the early German piano.

For the most part, Müthel's musical style is remarkably personal, his gestures intensely expressive. As in these variations, he reaches quite consistently beyond the limits of the light, elegant, and impersonal mid-eighteenth century *galant* language, although not entirely abandoning it. His melodic lines are supported by traditional harmonies, but he does not resort to clichés that would have made his audience feel comfortable. Instead, they would have been transported on waves of emotion, through virtuosic writing and subtle phrasing, to the heightened sensitivity he himself would have felt. At his freest moments, he might well have been inspired by immediate forerunners of similar musical audacity, such as Sebastian Bach's *Chromatic Fantasy*, Emanuel Bach's sixth *Württemberg Sonata*, or his *Fantasia in C minor* from the *Probestücke* to his *Essay*.

Each set of variations is based on an original melody of sixteen measures in binary form. The G major set is in duple metre, the C minor in triple metre. Neither piece has a change in mode, as became fashionable later in the century, but slight changes in tempo are indicated in the G major work. The two themes are unusually elaborate and include a profusion of short ornaments. In most of the variations, free melodic and rhythmic configurations and ornaments are prominent throughout; in some there are no ornaments at all. In the bass, the constant harmonic progression is often varied through arpeggiations, diversity in rhythmic patterns, and sweeping scale passages (exploited to their fullest in the last variation of each set).

Sections of the G major *Variations* are found in an earlier work. Its *Theme* and *Variations I, II, VI, VII, VIII* and *XI* were already prepared for publication as

one of the two suites Müthel composed while still in Schwerin. In that version, *Variation XI* is followed by the direction [*Arioso*] *da capo*, according to common practice. Here, the added twelfth variation continues the momentum of *Variation XI* with rhapsodic flourishes of an improvisatory nature.

The *C minor Variations* clearly are the greater of the two works, but are similar in structure to the G major set. The minor mode adds a darker quality and also lends itself to the expression of restless inner feeling. Significant perhaps is the fact that the opening measures of the *Arioso* recall Müthel's song 'An das Glück' (also in C minor) which is required to be performed 'Slow, with affect.' The last variation of this impressive work begins deceptively as a *da capo*, but erupts into an impetuous display of virtuosity creating a conclusion of extraordinary boldness.

CPE Bach's *Variations on Folies d'Espagne* (composed in 1778) present a well-established pattern of chords founded on a theme in the bass, together with its familiar melodic line. The twelve variations offer a broad spectrum of expression and compositional techniques, including passages with strict imitation between the hands. Some changes in tempo between variations (fast, very slow, and very fast) are indicated on the score, adding elements of virtuosity and moments of reflection.

Throughout several centuries, the *folia* (sometimes spelled *La follia* in Italy and known in France as the *Folies d'Espagne*) has been a source of inspiration for many composers. Its meaning of 'wild amusement,' and 'madness' can be traced to 15th-century Portugal, where it was a highly tempestuous dance with songs associated with peasants and shepherds. It later migrated to Spain and Italy. The early *folia* differs from a later, related form, popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Both types are based on a bass pattern in triple metre, which is repeated as a sequence of chords and forms a basis for improvisations of variations. Over time, a melodic theme also emerged that can be associated with the bass pattern, sometimes with the characteristic rhythmic motif of a short note followed by a long note on the second beat of most measures.

Notated versions by Marin Marais and Jean-Baptiste Lully in France, CPE Bach in Germany, Arcangelo Corelli, Giovanni Henrico Albicastro (Johann Henrich von Weissenburg), Alessandro Scarlatti, and Antonio Vivaldi in Italy attest to the inspiration this pattern generated for displaying virtuosity on a variety of instruments. Following its heyday during the baroque period, the folia continued to fascinate composers of later ages, including Franz Liszt (*Rapsodie Espagnole*) and Sergei Rachmaninov (*Variations on a Theme by Corelli*).

The Instruments

Tracks 1-3: Harpsichord by Frank Hubbard, Boston, USA, 1975, after an instrument by Andreas Ruckers, Antwerp, 1646, and enlarged by Pascal Taskin, Paris, 1780.

Tracks 4-5: Fortepiano by Robert R. Smith of Boston, 1981, after an instrument by Johann Jakob Könnicke, Vienna, 1796.

Track 6: Harpsichord by John Phillips, Berkeley, USA, 2001, after instruments by Johann Heinrich Gräbner, the Younger, Dresden, circa 1740.

Tuning assistance: Janine Johnson (1983) and Stephan Moss (1983 & 2010).

Harpsichordist and fortepianist **Preethi de Silva** is founder and director of Con Gioia Early Music Ensemble (www.congioia.org) and has performed extensively as a soloist and chamber musician throughout the United States, Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Singapore, Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom.

Born in Sri Lanka, where she received her early musical training, she later studied at the Royal Academy of Music, London, the Hochschule für Musik, Berlin, and at Yale University, where she received the Doctor of Musical Arts degree. She also has participated in workshops by harpsichordist Gustav Leonhardt and fortepianist Malcolm Bilson. She is the winner of numerous awards and fellowships, including several from the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD, Germany), JDR 3rd Fund (New York), a Fulbright Senior Scholar Fellowship, and the prestigious Erwin Bodky Award for early music performance.

Preethi de Silva's recordings of keyboard works by JS and CPE Bach and JG Müthel, have garnered extraordinary international critical acclaim. Her publications include music for harpsichord and oboe. Her book, *Fortepiano Writings of Streicher, Dieudonné, and the Schiedmayers*, on early nineteenth–century German manuals and a workshop notebook on fortepianos, was published by The Edwin Mellen Press and in 2008 was awarded The Adèle Mellen Prize 'for its distinguished contribution to scholarship.' She is the lead harpsichordist on Con Gioa's recording of JS Bach's *Concertos for One, Two, and Four Harpsichords* released by Centaur Records (CRC 3279), which currently is releasing her recordings of CPE Bach's *Six Collections for Connoisseurs and Amateurs*. In 2011, First Hand Records (UK) released *Harmonic Labyrinth*, which includes her own compositions for harpsichord. In 2014 and 2015 she will direct several concerts by Con Gioia and also return to Europe for recitals in commemoration of CPE Bach's 300th birthday.

Preethi de Silva is professor of music emerita of Scripps College, Claremont, California, and adjunct professor at Claremont Graduate University.

Thanks to Peter Bromley and Preethi de Silva.

Carl Philipp Emanuel BACH (1714-1788)

	Württemberg Sonata No. 6 in B minor, Wq49/6 (H36)	18:07
1	I. Moderato (varied repeats by Bach)	8:27
2	II. Adagio non molto (added embellishments & cadenza by Bach)	4:23
3	III. Allegro (varied repeats by Preethi de Silva) Première recording	5:17

Johann Gottfried MÜTHEL (1728-1788)

4	**Arioso and 12 Variations in G major**	12:57
5	**Arioso and 12 Variations in C minor**	14:42

Carl Philipp Emanuel BACH

6	**Variations on *Folies d'Espagne*, Wq118/9 (H263)**	8:57

Total Time: **54:43**

Preethi de Silva
harpsichord (tracks 1-3 & 6)
fortepiano (tracks 4-5)

Photo by David A Gautreau

Tracks 1-5:
First issued on Titanic Ti-123 (stereo LP)
Recorded at Bridges Hall of Music, Pomona College, Claremont, California, June-July 1983
Engineered by Ralph Dopmeyer, assisted by Peter Sutheim
Produced by Ralph Dopmeyer
Edited by Ralph Dopmeyer & Joseph Spencer, with Preethi de Silva

This issue:
Produced by FHR
Remastered by Jonathan Mayer (FHR), 2013
Design & typsetting: David Murphy (FHR)

Track 6:
First issued on First Hand Records FHR11
Recorded in the Garrison Theater, Scripps Performing Arts Centre, Claremont, Califonia, USA, May 18, 2010
Engineered by Matthew Snyder
Produced by Preethi de Silva

Cover painting: Portrait of Johann Gottfried Müthel from a private collection. Reproduced by kind permission of Frau Adelheid Busch née Müthel