

*cpo*

**Johann Christian Bach**

**Berlin Harpsichord Concertos 1**

**Anthony Halstead  
The Hanover Band**





Anthony Halstead (Photo: Jim Four)

**Johann Christian Bach** (1735-1782)

**The Berlin Harpsichord Concertos Vol. 1**

**Concerto in D minor \***

**18'35**

- |   |                   |      |
|---|-------------------|------|
| 1 | Allegro assai     | 6'34 |
| 2 | Adagio affettuoso | 7'06 |
| 3 | Allegro           | 4'46 |

**Concerto in B flat major \***

**19'11**

- |   |            |      |
|---|------------|------|
| 4 | Allegretto | 7'30 |
| 5 | Andante    | 6'52 |
| 6 | Presto     | 4'39 |

**Concerto in F minor**

**19'44**

- |   |                    |      |
|---|--------------------|------|
| 7 | Allegretto         | 6'36 |
| 8 | Andante e grazioso | 7'24 |
| 9 | Allegro            | 5'32 |

**T.T.: 57'30**

\* First Recordings

**Anthony Halstead**, Harpsichord & Direction  
**The Hanover Band**

Erfolg ist für die Hanover Band kein Fremdwort. Seit das Ensemble 1980 von seiner künstlerischen Leiterin Caroline Brown gegründet wurde, hat es sich zu einem der künstlerischen Fundamente der historischen Aufführungspraxis in Großbritannien entwickelt.

Heute gilt die Hanover Band als eines der führenden britischen Orchester mit historischen Instrumenten. Mit seinem breiten Repertoire und seinen exzellenten Interpretationen hat sich die Band einen internationalen Namen gemacht.

Regelmäßige Tourneen führen das Ensemble immer wieder in die bedeutenden britischen, europäischen und amerikanischen Konzertsäle. Und wo immer das Orchester auftritt, ist das Publikum fasziniert. Sowohl in seiner Heimat als auch im Ausland erfreuen sich die vielseitigen, zugänglichen künstlerischen Resultate des Ensembles grosser Beliebtheit. Caroline Brown hat sich für ein kühnes, innovatives Programm engagiert, das jetzt bei der mitreißenden erzieherischen Arbeit der Band Früchte trägt. Schon in der Pionierzeit der achtziger Jahre war das Publikum von der Klarheit und Leidenschaftlichkeit der Hanover Band unmittlerbar begeistert. Die New York Times berichtete, »daß die drängende, gewichtige, sogar rauhe Interpretation der Beethoven-Symphonien zu den größten Offenbarungen auf Originalinstrumenten gehört, die bisher aufgenommen wurden«.

Seit jenen frühen Tagen sind die Kritiker der Hanover Band treu geblieben. Heute sind die Rezensenten der Livekonzerte und der Aufnahmen so begeistert wie eh und je: »Wieder eine äusserst bezaubernde CD ... mit einer schlicht explosiven Vitalität«, schrieb CD Review im August 1994 zur Aufnahme der Pariser Symphonien Nr. 85-87 von Joseph Haydn.

Die umfangreiche Diskographie der Hanover Band enthält unter anderem den Zyklus der von Fonoforum ausgezeichneten Beethoven-Symphonien (Nimbus), Symphonien von Joseph Haydn (Hyperion), sämtliche Symphonien von Schubert (Nimbus) und Schumann (BMG) sowie Ouvertüren von Weber und Cherubini mit Roy Goodman. Seit 1993 nimmt die Band regelmäßig für das Red Seal Label der RCA Victor auf.

Derzeit spielt die Hanover Band unter der Leitung von Anthony Halstead sämtliche Werke von Johann Christian Bach für **epo** ein.

## Johann Christian Bach

(born Leipzig 5 September 1735 - died London, 1 January 1782)

Johann Christian was the most cosmopolitan of all the Bach family, arguably the most versatile and certainly in the eighteenth century the most famous. He must have received a thorough grounding in music under the supervision of his father, Johann Sebastian, in whose house he lived for the first fifteen years of his life. Nearly five years in Berlin under the guardianship of Carl Philipp Emanuel broadened his horizons and, above all, brought him into regular contact with opera. A further seven years in Italy exposed him to a multitude of new cultural experiences and laid the foundations of a reputation as an opera composer. This, in turn, took him in 1762 to London, which he found a congenial base for his activities as composer, performer and teacher for the rest of his life. His reputation, fostered by the publication of his works in all the main centres of Europe, brought him invitations to compose for the Mannheim court and the Paris Opera, two of the continent's most important musical institutions. The London public however eventually tired of him and he died in debt at the age of 46 after a period of ill-health, un lamented by the British but mourned by his admirer and friend of nearly 20 years, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

## Early Harpsichord Concertos

The catalogue of the estate of the Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (Verzeichniß des musikalischen Nachlasses des verstorbenen Capellmeisters Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach), published in Hamburg in 1790 by his widow, Johanna Maria, is not only a very important source of information about Emanuel's works but also about the music of the entire Bach dynasty. Furthermore it tells us most of what we know about the early compositions of Johann Christian Bach. Specifically it refers to "A packet containing compositions (by Johann Christian), prepared in Berlin, before the author went to Italy, comprising 5 keyboard concertos, 1 violoncello concerto, 2 trios and 3 arias." (ein Paket mit Compositionen, in Berlin verfertigt, ehe der Verfasser nach Italien ging, bestehend in 5 Clavier-Concerten, 1 Violoncell-Concert, 2 Trii und 3 Arien). The catalogue also lists some of his keyboard music included in an anthology and the scores of a symphony, an overture and a further keyboard concerto "in the style of Tartini," (nach Tartinis Manier). The catalogue does not specifically state that these works were from Johann Christian's Leipzig or Berlin periods, but the implication is there, not least because of the evident coolness between the two brothers in later years.

Of all these works only the five keyboard concertos can now be positively identified, in Johann Christian's autograph full score (Mus. mss. Bach P. 390) in the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek

Peussischer Kulturbesitz in Berlin. They are fairly typical products of the North German School of the time, the school of Carl Heinrich and Johann Gottlieb Graun, Franz and Georg Benda, and Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, with what the New Oxford History of Music calls its "antiquated language and confusion of styles." They are also generally quite unlike any of Johann Christian's compositions post-1755. Together with another "Berlin" concerto they are also the longest of his 26 authentic keyboard concertos and the only ones scored for soloist and four-part strings. Here every movement is built on the ritornello principle: a passage for the entire ensemble played at the beginning, repeated complete or in part a number of times during its course and one final time to bring the movement to a close, with passages for the solo instrument between the statements of the ritornello. This is the standard formal scheme for the baroque concerto. In the hands of a bad or lazy composer it could (and sometimes did) produce mechanical and cliché-ridden music, but even in the 1750s a talented and industrious artist could produce work of real interest and merit. During his nearly five years as Carl Philipp Emanuel's ward and pupil Johann Christian was in contact with many of the finest exponents of the genre. But these concertos are much more than the supervised composition exercises of a gifted student. They display accomplishment as well as talent.

### Concerto in D minor

Allegro assai - Adagio affettuososo - Allegro  
First recording

The first eight notes of the ritornello of the first movement are the key to the understanding of the entire movement. They dominate the ritornello itself, returning prominently half-way through, twice subsequently in the bass and at the beginning of the unison passage which rounds it off. For the record, Bach also uses this little motive in inverted and speeded up forms, but that is difficult to appreciate without a score. The first solo, based on the ritornello material, is short, just 12 bars. Then follow the first few bars of the ritornello played by the orchestra exactly as they were at the beginning. The solo harpsichord takes up the eight note motive again, but soon we feel the music is moving from minor to major. You will note on the way the two statements of the eight note motive in the violins under the solo instrument. The whole orchestra shortly returns with a couple of bars of the ritornello in the relative major key of F major before yielding again to the soloist. A much longer orchestral statement of the ritornello in F major (more than half of it) then follows, roughly a third of the way through the movement. The next third is by far the most complex part of the movement. As before there is alternation between the soloist and the orchestra, but there is also more modulation and some "development" in the orchestral part of the little 5-note figure which follows the main 8-note fi-

gure at the beginning of the ritornello. At the end the soloist emerges from this complex texture, there is a cadence and the ritornello returns in the orchestra in the dominant minor key. But, as happened before at its first statement in F major, this ritornello is of very brief duration - a false return, as it were. Then there is another short solo passage and a much fuller statement of the ritornello in A minor - actually the first half with four interpolated bars. The soloist then returns in the home key with the eight note motive and the order of musical events after that is much the same as in the first third of the movement following the opening ritornello, but a little longer and in different keys. The entire movement is then rounded off by the last 11 bars of the ritornello. If I have concentrated on this technical detail, it is only to show how carefully and imaginatively the teenage composer approached his task of injecting new life into an old form.

The remote key of B-flat major - the furthest tonally away from the main key of any Johann Christian Bach keyboard concerto, the tempo indication of *adagio* qualified by the adjective *affettuoso* (with tenderness) and muted strings all indicate that Bach was attempting a deeply felt slow movement. Such deep feelings are usually associated with minor keys. Bach, like Mozart after him, was able to achieve them in major keys too.

The concluding *allegro* uses many of the devices of the first movement, but also introduces others. To the casual hearer the beginning of the

first solo may appear to have little to do with the opening bars of the ritornello, but the attentive listener will notice that, while the soloist is rushing around in semiquavers, the pizzicato strings are playing its melody. The attentive listener will also notice that the first and second major returns of the ritornello begin not with its opening material but well into its second half. This might appear and sound eccentric had Bach not in both cases already "developed" the motive with which this truncated ritornello begins in the orchestra as an accompaniment to solo passagework. Finally, what appears to be the opening of the original ritornello returns for the one and only time in its original key and scoring at the very end of the work. In fact, it is just the final bars, the earlier sections having received so much attention earlier in the movement that Bach presumably judged that their further appearance would be too much.

### Concerto in B-flat major

Allegretto - Andante - Presto  
First recording

On the sixth page of the original score of this concerto is this inscription in Johann Christian's handwriting: "I have made this concerto ... is it not beautiful?" (Ich habe dieses Conc. gemacht ... ist das nicht schön?). Such seeking after approval is generally more in character in a young adolescent than a young man nearing twenty, so it seems reasonable to assume that this concerto

dates from Johann Christian's earliest years under Carl Philipp Emanuel's roof. There is physical evidence too to suggest that this was the earliest of the five to be composed: most of the work is on different paper from the rest of the manuscript and there are many more corrections and alterations than in the other works. Then there is the evidence of the work itself. In general the musical material is simpler and the structures more clear-cut. In the allegretto, for instance, the ritornello, already a sixth of the whole movement, is repeated note for note at the end. This is not to suggest that the work is merely an apprentice piece of no intrinsic interest.

In the first movement, the first solo begins with new material featuring the "feminine endings" and syncopation absent from the ritornello. Both in the ritornello and elsewhere there is that easy dialogue between instruments which was to remain a feature of Johann Christian's style to the very end of his life. The Andante (with the strings here too muted) also features a mannerism which was to be for ever his: melodies featuring a short note on the accented first beat of the bar followed by a longer note off the beat. Note too the startling use of the "Neapolitan sixth" near the end of the ritornello. The presto finale is a daring movement for a young composer to have written. Apart from its headlong pace and nearly 400 bars, it has a deceptively simple ritornello. The opening does not sound particularly fast, but as soon as it reaches the ninth bar you suddenly become aware of how quickly the music is going.

Very soon the bass and the violins begin a quasi-canon, rising ever higher only to descend to a pause bar. Then off it goes again, with the violins bowing away furiously in semiquavers, while the violas and the basses toss the opening motive of the ritornello from one to the other – the bass version inverted and the viola the correct way up. Immodest the young Johann Christian may have been, but I am sure you will agree with him that his concerto was indeed "schön."

### Concerto in F minor

Allegretto – Andante e grazioso – Allegro

This concerto is the best known of Johann Christian Bach's five "Berlin" concertos thanks to an edition published in 1954 and the only one to be recorded until recently. It is paradoxically the most "modern" sounding of the three concertos on this CD and at the same time the most "old-fashioned." It sounds "modern" to those ears accustomed to the later Bach concertos in its use of violins in thirds and sixths, with their clear-cut and sometimes repeated phrases. This is most apparent in the andante, significantly also marked e grazioso. It sounds "old-fashioned" to the same ears by virtue of all its unison passages in the outer movements and especially by the trills at the end of those in the first. The keyboard writing looks back to the baroque with some passages which would not seem to out of place in the *fifth Brandenburg Concerto* and also forward to the

rococo with others which could transfer with ease into one of the concertos of Johann Christian's Opus 1 or 7. However, perhaps its most striking feature is how different in overall character this concerto is from the others in the manuscript.

Ernest Warburton

### Anthony Halstead

Anthony Halstead's prominence in the period instrument movement takes him increasingly to those modern instrument orchestras wishing to develop an awareness and style of authentic baroque and classical practice.

Anthony Halstead was born in Manchester, attending Chetham's School and the Royal Manchester College of Music where he studied piano, horn, organ and composition. Subsequently he studied the harpsichord with George Malcolm and conducting with Sir Charles Mackerras and Michael Rose. He now has a varied career as a conductor, director/harpsichordist and as a horn soloist of international repute.

Anthony Halstead made his professional conducting debut in 1976 with the world premiere of the musictheatre work »One and the Same« by Elisabeth Lutyens. However, following the development of his interest in authentic performance he has worked regularly with several period in-

strument orchestras – notably The Hanover Band, The Academy of Ancient Music and The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment – conducting or directing outstanding concerts that have included an all J. S. Bach programme at the BBC Proms, at the prestigious Berlin Bach Tage and, most recently, on tour in The Netherlands.

On CD, Anthony Halstead has conducted or directed many recordings. These include the symphonies of J. M. Kraus and concertos by J. H. Roman for Musica Sveciae, Bach's Brandenburg Concertos and a CD of concertos by Vivaldi for EMI Eminence, plus the complete Drottningholm Music by J. H. Roman and the complete Cello Concertos by Boccherini's for Naxos/Marco Polo, in which the soloist is Timothy Hugh. In addition he is currently engaged on a 5 year project to record all the orchestral music of J. C. Bach for **cpo**.

Anthony Halstead has conducted several orchestras in the UK – the English Chamber Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, The Ulster and BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra – in addition to his concert work with period instrument orchestra. Elsewhere, he has received many invitations to conduct or direct in Scandinavia, Germany, Spain, Japan and Australia.