

# **Bach's Creative Journey**

A Study of Source, Circumstance, Genre,  
Interpretation and Procedure in the Earliest Music of  
J. S. Bach (1685-1750)

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# Abstract

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) is one of the most researched composers in Western music, yet attempts to comprehend the universal personality of the man continue unabated. The earliest period of his creative life, between 1685 and 1705, presents many, as yet unsolved, problems, and what is becoming apparent is the need for a further, fresh perspective on his earliest creative development.

Recent advances in document analysis techniques have pushed back the accepted dating of works usually regarded as fully mature, altering the previously accepted chronology of the point at which Bach reached full creative maturity as a composer. It is becoming increasingly apparent that this is likely to have been by 1705, expunging some of the previously accepted, but evidentially unsubstantiated or incorrect biographical positions assumed by Schweitzer and Spitta, many of which have remained largely unquestioned for over one hundred years.

With specific focus on Bach's Ohrdruf and Lüneburg periods, and with reference to source-based palaeographic research undertaken here, in particular concerning a fresh examination of the earliest available copies of BWV 768, this thesis undertakes an analysis of Bach's initial compositions, focusing on the chorale partitas. It provides fresh perspectives on the creative processes which led to the composition of the extensive Lutheran chorale variations and defines the circumstances in which the young composer operated during his adolescent years.

The final contribution in this thesis concerns fresh evidence contained in Bach's initial compositions for keyboard, in particular through original research on the manuscript sources of BWV 768, which indicate a chronological shift to an earlier point in Bach's life at which maturity in his keyboard pieces may now be determined.



# Acknowledgements

## Dedication

*This research is dedicated to my grandparents, John & Brenda Grigsby, for their lifelong support of my ideas and studies, and to my parents, Stephen & Sandra, for never dissuading me from exploring seemingly obscure avenues of learning.*

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## List of Abbreviations

ABB	Andreas-Bach-Büch
AMB	Anna Magdalena Bach
AMS	Autograph Manuscript
Anh	Anhang (Appendix)
BC	<i>Bach Compendium</i> ed. Schulze/Wolff vol. 1 1985-1989
Dok I, II, III	<i>Bach-Dokumente</i> ed. Bach-Archiv Leipzig, 3 vols. 1963 Neumann/Schulze, 1969 Neumann/Schulze, 1972 Schulze
BJ	<i>Bach-Jahrbuch</i> ed. Schulze/Wolff (1975 <sup>ff.</sup> )
BWV	Bach-Werke-Verzeichnis, Schmieder 1950, rev. 1990
CB	Clavierbüchlein
CM	Chorale Melody
CPE	Carl Philipp Emanuel
CT	Chorale Text
DürrC	Chronologie der Leipziger Vokalwerke
FDE	Forensic Document Examination
JSB	Johann Sebastian Bach
KB	Kritischer Bericht
MM	Möllersch-Handschrift
MS	Single Manuscript
MSS	Multiple Manuscripts
NBA	<i>Neue Bach-Ausgabe</i> ed. Johann-Sebastian-Bach- Institut Göttingen/Bach-Archive Leipzig (1954 <sup>ff.</sup> )
PT	Partitas
QD	Questioned Document
WZ	Wasserzeichen (Watermark)