

The manuscripts I used in editing this volume are for the most part the property of the Royal Library in Berlin. Two important manuscripts belong to the Amalien Library of the Joachimsthal High School. I should like to express my thanks to the librarians Dr. Kopfermann and Prof. Heller for their help and generous cooperation in my work, and my gratitude to City Councilman Hagenbuch in Zurich and Dr. Erich Priege in Berlin, who kindly placed at my disposal the most interesting source-documents of their private collections.

The first Book of the "Well-Tempered Clavier" bears the following autograph title:

"Das wohltemperirte Clavier oder Praeludia und Fugen durch alle Tone und Semitonia sowohl tertiam majorem oder Ut Re Mi anlangend, als auch tertiam minorem oder Re Mi Fa betreffend. Zum Nutzen und Gebrauch der Lehrbegierigen Musikalischen Jugend als auch derer in diesem Studio schon habil seyenden besonderen Zeitvertreib aufgesetzt und verfertiget von Johann Sebastian Bach p. t. hochfürstl. Anhalt. Cöthenischen Capellmeistern und Directore derer Kammer-Musiquem. Anno 1722."

"The Well-Tempered Clavier, or Preludes and Fugues through all the tones and semi-tones, in regard to both the *major third* or Ut Re Mi, and the *minor third* or Re Mi Fa. For the benefit and use of the musical youth wishing to learn, and for the entertainment of those already skilled in this study. Devised and composed by Johann Sebastian Bach, Capellmeister to his serene highness the Prince of Anhalt-Cöthen, and Director of his Chamber Music, in the year 1722."

Considering the unusually large quantity of autograph source-material at my disposal, an amount no previous editor has had access to, I might have dispensed with the additional investigation of several rather less important manuscript copies. Yet, because of the essentially critical purpose of this edition, I felt I should examine a great number of these manuscript copies as well as some of the early printed editions. All deviations in the autographs are listed in the footnotes, as well as the variants found in the manuscript copies of Kirnberger, Altnikol, Schwenke, Gerber, and No. 205. The variants in the untrustworthy Forkel manuscript are cited only in the cases where they influenced the edition published by Hoffmeister. I have disregarded text alterations in manuscript copies of inferior quality except when they offer a variant of musical value, or are substantiated by other sources.

In comparing the early printed editions, I have limited myself to those of incontestable authority, to avoid the necessity of recording many merely arbitrary attempts at improvements. Only the older editions of Hoffmeister, Simrock, and Nägeli are of important critical interest, and the more recent editions of Kroll (Peters Edition and the Edition of the Bach-Gesellschaft). I refer to other early printings only in exceptional instances.

It seemed to me superfluous to mention in the footnotes every single manuscript copy in which the same variants are found. I have usually listed only the most authoritative and important documents in these cases.

The following description of the source-material used in this edition will help orient the reader to the respective merits of the various autographs and manuscript copies, and also point out the most important problems involved in a critical study of the text:

AUTOGRAPHS

I call "A" the Wagener-Volkmann autograph (Royal Library). It is by far the best of the source-documents now available. First, because it is almost complete; only the F# major Fugue and the beginning of the F# minor Prelude are missing. Secondly, because it was written much more carefully than any of the other definitely authentic autographs. Since, through some accident, it lay for some time in the Danube, some of the handwriting became faded and obscured. An attempt was later made to retouch these spots, to which surely no objection can be made. On the other hand, the autograph also shows many important alterations of highly doubtful authenticity. Kroll — with a hardly understandable predilection — considered these alterations to be so excellent that he reproduced them practically intact in his edition of the Bach-Gesellschaft. I myself am far from seeing them as an improvement; the fact that they are also found in the manuscript copies of Kirnberger and Altnikol is no proof of their authenticity.

It seems that Kirnberger, on his own responsibility, sometimes undertook to improve Bach. In view of the great authority he held, it is possible that apocryphal alterations found their way from his manuscript copy into the "A" autograph, since it is obvious that many different hands have tampered with this autograph. I must mention here that one manuscript copy, entirely unknown to me, but used by Kroll (Bach-Gesellschaft, XIV, p. 15, No. 6), and apparently written in 1736 or later, absorbed only a part of the abovementioned alterations. It is important to bear in mind that the "A" autograph is dated 1732. Without flatly rejecting the authenticity of these later alterations in "A", I have nevertheless considered it proper to take into the main musical text of this edition only those that are unquestionably authentic. (See Fugue I, footnote 1, and Prelude III, footnote 1.) On a third staff, above or below the main text, I have placed the less authentic, but perhaps valid variants: the more questionable variants are listed in the footnotes. These alterations are not found in any of the other autographs, except the one mentioned in footnote 3 to the B minor Fugue.

The second autograph, "B" (Royal Library), extends from the middle of the C# minor Fugue almost to the end of the A minor Fugue. From Friedemann Bach the autograph passed on to Müller, organist of the cathedral in Braunschweig, who added the missing pieces in the opening section. From him the manuscript changed hands to Griepenkerl. Friedemann Bach is supposed to have completed the ending of the A minor Fugue and the numbers following it. Nothing is known of the date of this autograph. In the main it follows the earlier readings in "A", but the handwriting is strikingly careless, particularly towards the end. In addition, many other changes have been scrawled over it by spurious hands. This non-autographic portion is of little significance.

Much superior is the so-called Fischhoff autograph, "C" (Royal Library). Unfortunately its authenticity is in doubt. It contains, as do most of Bach's copies, several new and plausible variants. It is also interesting because of its references to older sources. For instance, the sequence of keys — D minor, D major, E minor, E major, etc. — is the same as the sequence of keys of the Preludes in Friedemann's "Klavierbüchlein". Certainly this manuscript is entitled to the stamp of authority. With regard to a printed note pasted on the manuscript, I must admit that the questionable answer to the theme in the B minor Fugue (see footnote 3 to that Fugue) may be authentic, for traces of it, despite erasure, are clearly perceptible in "A".

The autograph "D" is next in importance to "A" as a source-document. Spitta has given an accurate description of it, together with excellent examples of some of the variants, in the first volume of his Bach biography (p. 837ff.). This document was passed — from an owner whose identity is not definitely known — to Hans Georg Nägeli, whose son passed it on to Mr. Ott-Usteri in Zurich, who in turn passed it on to his son-in-law, City Councilman Hagenbuch in Zurich. According to information given me by the present owner and by Music Director G. Weber in Zurich regarding the fate of the Bach manuscripts from the Nägeli estate, the authenticity of this autograph is indisputable. The handwriting also, with the exception of a few incorrect ornaments, seems indubitably genuine. This autograph shows less retouching by other hands than either "A" or "B", although it does have many careless errors due to hasty writing. It extends from the D minor Fugue to the very end, and follows in the main the earlier versions of "A". As to the date of this autograph, Spitta supposes that it was written before "A": this I can neither confirm nor deny. However there may be a slight confirmation of this in the fact that "D" contains the later readings of "A" (see footnote 3 to the B minor Fugue). On the other hand, "C" shows a C# instead of a B in the same place. Bach himself was obviously undecided. But all in all, the character of the variants gives us no clue to the date of this autograph. I am far from underrating the credit due Spitta for bringing the autograph "D" to light; but I do think he regards the readings in this manuscript much too favorably. Certainly it gives an authoritative answer to many questions, but it also contains many errors and the little insignificant changes Bach made, perhaps unconsciously, while copying his own works. Therefore I cannot agree with the worthy biographer that the versions in "D" outweigh the combined evidence of the autographs "A", "B", and "C".

In questions of notes as well as embellishments I have made my decisions after a comparative study of "A", "B", "C", and "D". Kroll's strong leaning towards "A" — even to the ornaments in that autograph — has produced some questionable results. In the present edition, all ornaments that are definitely authentic are in large type; the more doubtful ones in smaller type. Critical details are given in the footnotes. I have omitted only a few unimportant errors that crept in from hasty or careless copying.

In some cases the musical text could not be absolutely verified because of the inconsistencies in the old orthography. Generally we must adhere to the principle that every note without an accidental should be read strictly according to the key signature, except when the same note appears twice successively in the same voice. In this case, the accidental of the first note is carried over to the second. The comments in the footnotes should be compared in the questionable places.

Another interesting autographic source which should be mentioned is the copies of several of these numbers in Friedemann's "Klavierbüchlein". I refer to the Preludes in C major, C minor, D minor, D major, E minor, E major, F major, C# major, C# minor, E \flat minor, and F minor. Since the "Klavierbüchlein" antedates "A", "B", "C", and "D", its readings can obviously not be indisputably authoritative. For our purposes, its chief value lies in the fact that some of the Preludes appear in a shortened form, which Forkel followed in his copy. The opinion that these abridged versions represent Bach's final intentions—a hypothesis hard to believe from a musical point of view—has been historically disproved. (See Spitta, *Bach I*, p. 836.)

A copy of the C major Prelude that appears in the more extensive "Klavierbüchlein der Anna Magdalena" (1725), probably copied by Bach's wife, is of interest here only because it, too, omits the measure contained in Schwenke's copy.

MANUSCRIPT COPIES

The following manuscript copies are of secondary value; yet, as I have already mentioned, I had to consider the most important variants in them, in making a thorough study of all the source-documents available. I have omitted only unimportant discrepancies in ornamentation.

The copy of *Kirnberger* (Amalien Library) follows the later versions in "A", but also includes some rather arbitrary alterations on its own. It was probably the working copy of its owner, although it contains many uncorrected errors. Yet it gave a certain authority to the great theorist. No. 49 (Amalien Library) has practically the same text as the *Kirnberger* copy, but was copied more carefully.

The copy of *Altnikol* (Royal Library) also follows in the main the later readings of "A", although it too contains some peculiar alterations which the copyist — Bach's son-in-law — wrote down, probably from word-of-mouth tradition, or from an authority unknown to us. The manuscript is reliable, and there is no reason to suspect that its deviations are accidental.

The copy of *Schwenke* (Royal Library), made in 1783, is accurate in the main, but it also contains many readings not substantiated by the autographs. These are mentioned primarily because of their influence on the Simrock Edition.

The copy of *Forkel* (Royal Library No. 212) contains only single numbers, and is full of errors. I would have ignored it as a critical source if its alterations had not found their way into the *Hoffmeister* and *Peters* editions.

The copy of *Gerber*, belonging to Dr. *Prieger* in Berlin, was made in 1725 while *Gerber* was studying with *Bach*. It is incomplete and lacks the care that gives so great a value to *Gerber's* copies of the "Suites". It is highly interesting in that most of the minor pieces end on a minor third.

No. 205 (Royal Library) is significant because it is certain that part of it was copied directly from "B". But *Kroll* is in error when he believes that he can draw a conclusion from this copy about the missing parts in "B". No. 205 contains readings of these first numbers that could not possibly have originated in "B". (See *Fugue V*, footnote 12, and *Fugue VIII*, footnote 24.) I believe that the autograph "B" was the model for the manuscript copy No. 205 only from *Prelude IX* on.

No. 208 (Royal Library), based on the later readings in "A", is so inaccurate that I have not mentioned its variants, since they are unsubstantiated elsewhere.

No. 207 (Royal Library) is completely useless.

No. 417 (Royal Library) contains the older readings in the autographs and was corrected according to *Kirnberger's* copy.

EARLY PRINTED EDITIONS

As already mentioned, the only printed editions I have compared in this investigation were those that were unquestionably published from manuscript material.

Simrock's edition was based mainly on *Schwenke's* manuscript copy.

Hoffmeister's edition, in the main, follows *Forkel's* readings.

Nägeli, while chiefly following "D", also contains many foreign variants that may not be authentic. I think it very probable that *Nägeli*, who naively tried to improve *Beethoven's* Piano Sonata in G major, Op. 31, No. 1 (See *Thayer, Beethoven II*, p. 200), also changed *Bach* in the same way at his own discretion.

There is no doubt that the abovementioned editions are inadequate, since they show little critical care or editorial conscientiousness. But I had to examine them, because they have served as the basis for most subsequent editions. The first publication of this work that was prepared with the benefit of a large body of source-material was that of Kroll in the Peters Edition. The reason that I seldom refer to this edition is that Kroll used the same source-material for his edition of the Bach-Gesellschaft, which is a better base for our critical purposes.

With the exception of the apparently unimportant manuscript copies cited by Kroll as No. 6 and No. 9 (See Edition of the Bach-Gesellschaft, Vol. XIV, pp. XV and XVI), I am thoroughly familiar with all the source-material used in that publication. The fact that our edition shows essential deviations from the above edition results from the increased source-material at my disposal, and its influence upon the evaluation of the later corrections in the autographs. Since I have drawn attention to many important points overlooked by Kroll, I feel doubly obliged to acknowledge the careful conscientiousness of that fine musicologist. Finally I should like to take this opportunity of thanking Mr. Robert Schaab of Leipzig for his painstaking correction of this edition.

In this volume the original phrase marks of Bach appear in heavier type than the phrasing indications of the present editor. The few staccatos in Bach's autographs are noted here by *v*.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTES

FOR THE PRACTICAL USE OF THIS VOLUME

All embellishments in large type are authentic as substantiated by the autographs or by a majority of them. The ornaments in small type and the grace-notes in brackets are of questionable authenticity; they generally originate from a single manuscript, in which they were later additions. The footnotes in each case give further information.




TABLE OF EMBELLISHMENTS

The following general rules will be helpful to the student in using this volume:

- 1) Grace-notes (appoggiaturas), like all other embellishments, fall on the beat of the main note; they should be played quickly, unless indicated otherwise in the footnotes.
- 2) The trill (tr or ~) as a rule begins on the auxiliary note. It is usually played with an after-beat, unless one or more ending notes are written out. The after-beat is unnecessary before a descending second. The symbol for the trill with an after-beat is  or . The trill starting on the lower note  and the one starting on the upper note  generally end with an after-beat. The same realizations are indicated by the following signs respectively:  and . The short trill  is usually tied to the preceding upper second. This sign often takes the place of  and tr.

3) The mordent  or  often takes the lower minor second as the auxiliary note, unless the

neighboring tone itself is a lower major second (cf. Türk, Ch. IV, p. 61).

4) The turn ∞, when the sign is placed over a note, is executed ; when it is placed between two notes it is played . In dotted rhythm, the turn usually ends on the dot .

5) The slurred note  is played 

6) Other embellishments are explained in the footnotes.

The phrasing marked by the editor at the beginning of several of the Fugues should be followed throughout the entire piece.

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