# Innovations in C. P. E. Bach's Gellert Lieder

## Stephanie J. Rizvi-Stewart
## stephanie.rizvi-stewart@ttu.edu

## Development of the First Berlin Lieder Schule

❖ Formed during the reign of Friederick the Great (1712-1786).

❖Members included the writers Christian Gottfried Krause (bap. 1719, d. 1770) and Wilhelm Ramler (1725-1798), and composers Johann Joachim Quantz (1697-1773) and Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg (1718-1795).

❖The Goal of the Lieder Schule was to create an "idealized song type."

❖Their model was the French Chanson

❖The Lieder Schule favored careful text declamation, minimal accompaniment, and simple, unadorned melodies.

❖In 1753, Birnstiel publishes the first volume of *Oden mit Melodien.* Edited by Ramler and Krause, this lieder collection is considered the inaugural publication of the Lieder Schule.

❖Ramler and Krause avoid figured bass, accompanimental interludes, and complex inner voices.

❖The compositions resulting from this aesthetic are essentially a two-voice strophic lied with the second voice being a continuo-like bass line.

❖These compositional ideas shaped the lieder of the next few decades.

## Musical Example from *Oden Mit Melodien*

J. J. Quantz, "Wenn ich mir ein Mädchen wähle," text by Ramler

❖Two voice texture suitable for a single, amateur performer.

❖Bass line moves by step or skip and outlines the harmony

❖Bass primarily moves parallel or oblique to the vocal line. However, there is an example of contrary motion in mm. 7.

❖Harmonically, the piece oscillates primarily between the tonic and dominant. In mm. 9-12 there is a brief tonicization of V.

❖The piece ends with a simple I-IV-V-I cadence.

❖Intervals between the bass and voice are primarily consonant, although there is a tritone plus an octave in measures 15 and 19.
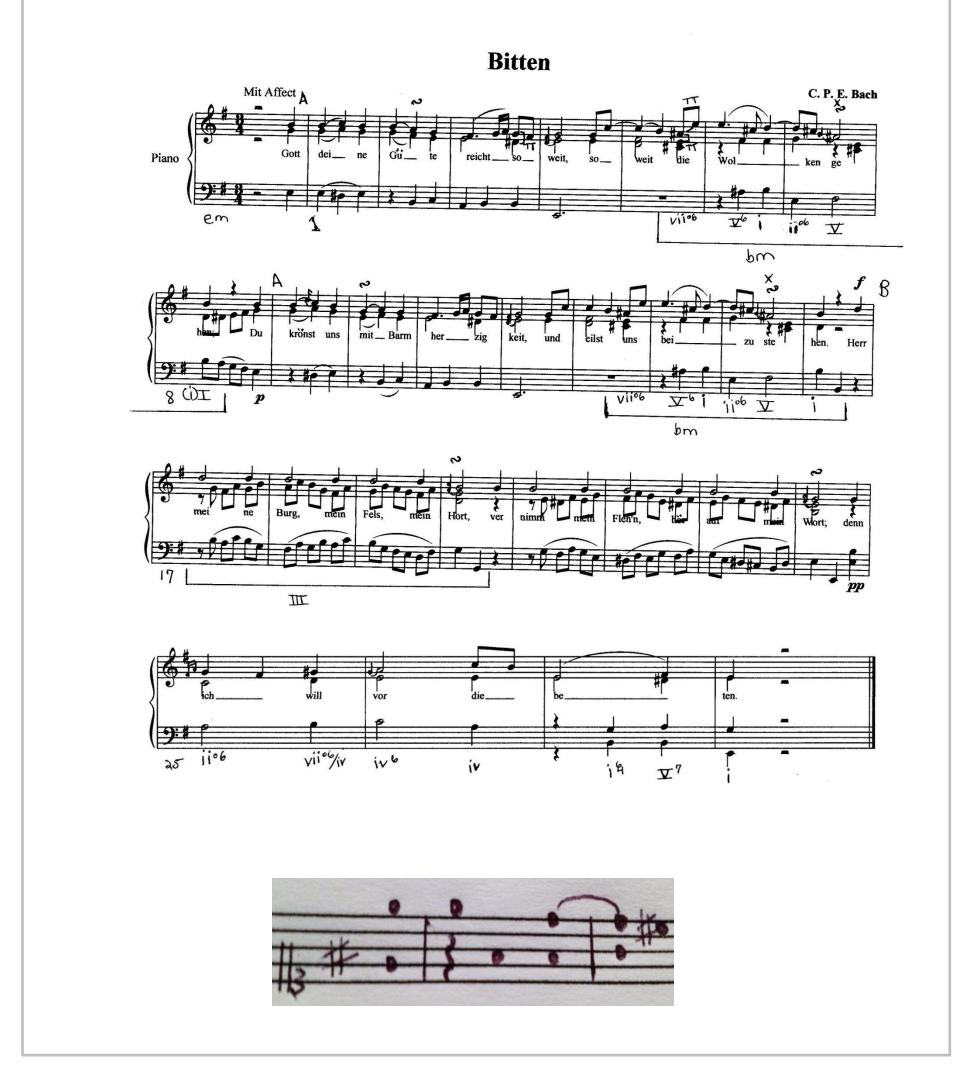
❖Accompaniment has only two embellishments (mm. 15, 19)



## Introduction

   In 1758, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714-1788) published his *Geistliche Oden und Lieder* with texts by Christian Fürchtegott Gellert. Although Bach engaged in the compositional activities of the First Berlin Lieder Schule, his *Geistliche Oden und Lieder*, (or Gellert songs as they are commonly known) represent a significant shift away from the conventions of the Berlin Lieder Schule in that they foreshadow future lieder compositions, specifically those of the Romantic era. In this paper, drawing on scores, secondary material, and primary sources, I will argue that C.P.E. Bach's Gellert songs represent a significant innovation in the role of musical accompaniment. Bach's innovations found within these works include significantly more complex harmonic and contrapuntal language, the idiomatic keyboard accompaniment, as well as the use of instrumental postludes to aid in strophic composition.
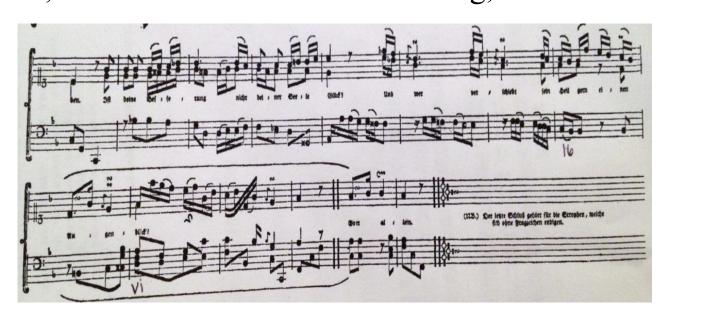
### C.P.E. Bach "Bitten"
❖"Bitten" is in three voice texture, with instances of four voices in mm. 15, 24, and 27.
❖Bach sets inner voices at intervals other than a third or sixth. In mm 3: major second between inner and upper voice on beat 1; also the first of several tritones appears on beat 3. On beat 3 in mm 5, Bach stacks tritones.
❖Each A section opens in E minor and includes a tonicization of B minor (v). The A sections end with the following progression in B minor: viiᵒ⁶- V⁶-i-iiᵒ⁶- V-I.
❖B section opens in the relative major (III).
❖Piece closes with the following cadence: iiᵒ⁶-viiᵒ⁶/iv-iv⁶-iv-i⁶⁴- V⁷-i
❖Bass and inner voices move independently of each other.
❖Example of species counterpoint in mm. 5-7 and 13-15 (see reduction ).
❖In mm. 17-19 and 21-23, the vocal line only makes sense in context with the accompaniment.
❖There are numerous embellishments. The singer could choose which to use and which to leave for the accompanist.



### Reception
❖Bach's Gellert lieder were praised upon publication: "The religious poems of Herr Gellert were written – and, indeed for edification through song. Therefore they seem hampered by the lack of melodies, and they could not easily have received them from a worthier hand than that of Herr Bach, who has long been accustomed to uniting the noblest expression with the secrets of his art."
❖The collection was reprinted in 1759, 1764, 1771, and 1784. Gellert's commentary: They are beautiful, but too beautiful for a singer who is not musical."
❖Issues associated with their level of difficulty and pianistic tendencies were commented on by Bach's contemporaries:"Indeed they seem to have been conceived more in terms of the keyboard than the voice."

### C.P.E Bach "Wider den Aufschub der Bekehrung"

❖Bach uses the accompaniment to vary the strophic setting.

❖Some strophes end with a question, while others end with a statement.

❖In order to portray this difference, Bach provides two endings.

❖Measure 16 ends the musical material that is the same for both endings.

❖Measures 17- 20 form the "question" ending. The last syllable cadences on vi. An instrumental interlude transitions back to the tonic for the following stanza.

❖The two measures at the end of the slur are the "statement" ending. This ending uses a I⁶⁴ –V⁷-I cadence. Because the cadence ends on the tonic, there is no need for an instrumental interlude.

❖Other Gellert songs that utilize this technique include "Wider den Geiz," "Bertraun auf Gottes Borfehung," and "Demuth."



## The Gellert Lieder (1758)

❖Although the C.P.E Bach's Gellert Lieder were published five years after the first volume of *Oden mit Melodien,* the aesthetic views of the Lieder Schule had not significantly changed.

❖Bach's collection is the first publication associated with the Lieder Schule to use all religious poetry and to feature the works of a single poet.

❖It is one of the first collections to include dynamic markings.

❖Bach's settings feature more adventurous harmonies, contrapuntal writing, and greater interaction between the voices.

❖Bach's compositional goals are laid out in the preface to the published collection.

❖Bach writes out the full harmonies and suggests that these pieces could be used as keyboard pieces.

❖Bach addresses and seeks to remedy the problem of how to express the text in strophic composition.

## Conclusion

C. P. E. Bach's Gellert songs did not immediately change lieder composition, but because of their popularity, it is possible that early Romantic composers were familiar with them. It is also important that a keyboard composer of Bach's caliber chose to use his talents in service of song. Later keyboardists, such as Beethoven, Schubert and Schumann would follow in his footsteps. By filling out the harmony and providing richer contrapuntal interest, Bach created a memorable set of songs suitable for singers and keyboardists. Future studies could perhaps determine the specific significance and impact of Bach's keyboard compositions on the Gellert songs or the Gellert songs on his keyboard works. Bach was not the only composer to set Gellert's poems, and it remains for future researchers to decide whether there are specific references to Bach's works in these later compositions.

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