BWV 565:
Composer Found?*

By Jonathan B. Hall

The debate over the authenticity of BWV 565, the Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, *has continued for thirty years. This article summarizes and critiques key points of that debate, taking the position that J. S. Bach is not the composer. A candidate composer is presented, Cornelius Heinrich Dretzel of Nuremberg (1697–1775). A stylistic comparison of his* Divertimento Armonico *to BWV565 reveals a very high level of congruity, arguing for his authorship.*

The problem

For about thirty years, the question of the authorship of BWV 565—the famous *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor*, long attributed to J. S. Bach—has been raised civilly but persistently. Broached in 1981 by Peter Williams,[1] the question has spawned a variety of imaginative answers: that the piece is definitely by Bach, from his earliest youth;[2] that it is possibly a transcribed violin work;[3] that it is *certainly* a transcribed violin work;[4] that it may have been intended for five-string 'cello;[5] or even better, for lute;[6] or that it may have been written for harpsichord;[7] that it may have been written by Kellner;[8] that we may, one day, figure out who wrote it;[9] and so forth. Everyone agrees that the piece is wonderful. While all of these are interesting, none is convincing, save the last, which admits no argument.

The young-Bach or pre-Weimar theory is based, in essence, upon the multipartite nature of the piece, its extensive use of passagework, and its perceived emotionalism; yet the open-ended, improvisatory structure is not clearly akin to the five-part *präludia* of Buxtehude or his ilk. It is also too distinctive, too fluently assured, to be the early effort of a student, even a brilliant one. One also notes the clear Italian influence in harmony and style, the absence of internal sectional cadences, and the simplicity of the counterpoint: all atypical of North German practice. (Surely, given the work's famous final cadence, a young Bach would have noticed opportunities for internal cadences as well.)

Also, we have a specimen of Bach's youthful writing, his *Capriccio sopra la lontananza del suo fratello dilettissimo*, BWV 992; the keyboard idiom and harmonic language are both dissimilar to those of 565, the fugal writing in particular. We possess as well a number of chromatic, high-strung, 'Arnstadt' chorale settings, such as BWV 715; very possibly the infamous *variationes* so displeasing to the Arnstadt consistory in 1706.[10] One cannot realistically imagine their composition after a very early stage, certainly not as teaching pieces. In any case, they are a far cry from the fluid idiom and transparent harmonies of 565, even if they display a predilection for fully diminished harmonies. Their harmonic language and keyboard idiom are too opaque, and for all their off-putting audacity lack anything like the genuine dramatic import of 565.

It would seem, in any case, that Bach's formation as an organist is more the work of north German composers such as Böhm and Buxtehude, not to mention the transplanted Bohemian Johann Kuhnau, his predecessor in Leipzig. Bach's early fascination with (and perhaps moonlight copying of) works like the *Fiori Musicali* would not have exposed him to the *seconda prattica* represented in 565. The Toccata and Fugue is assigned to Bach's teenage years, ultimately, because it is least out of place there.

Christoph Wolff states firmly that 565 is indeed an early work of Bach; he relates it to Forkel's description of the undisciplined enthusiasm of Bach's earliest work.[11] However, for this writer, Forkel's description does not suit the Toccata and Fugue, though it applies well to the chorales just mentioned. One notes again the economy of the toccata and the fluency of the fugue, which strikes one as the work not of *immature genius* but of *mature ingenuity*—neither undisciplined nor early. Like Gandalf, it arrives (complete with magical fireworks!) neither early nor late, but *precisely when it means to*.

As to the work's purported violinistic roots, due note is taken of the bariolage technique that is emulated in much of the work, including the fugue subject; but no candidate composer comes forth, nor any evidence for the conjectured A-minor original. Williams's seminal article rests, at least in part, on a reversal of the burden of proof: the work cannot be proven to be for the organ.[12] The balance of his argument relies on the work's evocation of string idiom, and thus the comparative ease with which the work may be paraphrased on violin—albeit transposed and thinned out!

Johann Paul von Westhoff is mentioned, even though his music bears no trenchant similarity to the work in question. He is chiefly useful as an example of ending a violin piece with an open fifth, a common enough occurrence and one which, here, helps beg the question of the inconvenient final minor chord. (Also avoided in this violin 'reconstruction' is the poor 4–1 resolution in the bass line in the final cadence in the organ work—it simply disappears, replaced by a leading tone that resolves quite properly.) Meanwhile, a touchier question—*why a pedal solo in the middle of a violin piece?*—is not raised, because it cannot be answered. What else could that passage be? What other *raison d'être* can it have, how can it even avoid risibility, if it is not there to display *pedaliter* pyrotechnics?

In several recent studies, Williams is willing to leave the question open. In the earlier, he mentions in particular the cello theory; in the later, he hews to agnosticism.[13] Here and elsewhere, he remains undecided whether the work is a transcription, or by someone else.[14]

In another article, Bruce Fox-Lefriche states with finality that 565 *was* written for violin solo.[15] No choice is offered: the essay asserts that there is "no doubt" that the piece cannot have been written either by Bach or for the organ, because it is "unidiomatic" and "far too clumsy."[16] (In fact, it is neither; it is thoroughly idiomatic to the organ, and quite fluid throughout.) It would seem evident that any attempt to 'reconstruct' a violin 'original' is a *prima facie* impossibility, because there is nothing to reconstruct it *from*. Yet the magazine offers two excerpts from his violin arrangement, the editor (not the author) claiming outrageously that it was "reconstructed" from "an 18th-century manuscript that is *also the basis of the organ work*"[17] (emphasis mine). This "basis" is, of course, Ringk's manuscript *of* the organ work.

To his credit, Fox-Lefriche recognizes the problems with the early-Bach theory, for some of the same stylistic reasons I shall mention below. He rightly notes the unisons and solos, the odd abruptness of the arpeggio in bar 3, the long stretches of unvaried harmony, and the apparent disregard of basic rules—all signally foreign to Bach's style.[18] I believe he is certainly correct when he says that "Bach had nothing whatsoever to do with the piece, either for violin or for organ,"[19] at least insofar as authorship is concerned.

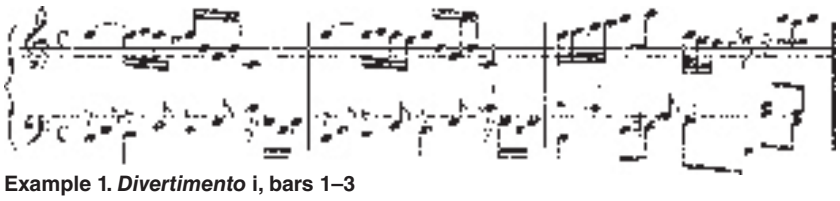
Similar problems accrue to the 'cello and lute theories. Both take note of idioms familiar to their instruments of choice, and wish to claim the work as their own. However, neither of these theories is presented dogmatically. (Mark Argent, in particular, advances the 'cello hypothesis with welcome caution.) Certainly, this writer has no trouble whatsoever with transcriptions or arrangements of the work: nay, the more the merrier: come fiddle, come xylophone. But they must be acknowledged as transcriptions or arrangements, and never as paths to an imagined *Urtext*.

The harpsichord theory cannot explain the sustained chords over a prolonged tonic pedal in bar 3 of the toccata; or the sustained and untrillable dominant pedal tone in the left hand during the fugue (bars 105 and following); or the *adagissimo* section towards the end. All of these depend on the unique sustaining power of the organ; I cannot imagine any application of *style brisé* that could do them justice. (And again: why a pedal solo? The piece is equally unsuited to a pedal harpsichord.)

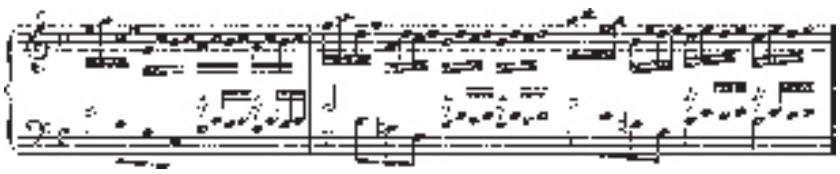
I find that the piece is *conceived* in and *saturated* in organ idiom, so that no degree of arrangement or copyist intervention can be conjured to account for the received text. This idiom does not demonstrate anything more than stylish feints at string technique. Its antinomian pretensions, such as the long unisons, "trivial" part writing, ambient plagality and final chords, must be dealt with; they cannot be solved by subtracting the pipe organ from the equation. In fact, the organ is not the source of discomfort, but rather Bach himself.

As far as a different *organ* composer is concerned, 565 is closer to Kellner's style than to Bach's, but it is also *not* Kellner's style. This conjecture, advanced by David Humphreys, cites two examples of Kellner's organ writing.[20] They are striking, displaying both facility and drama. Still, they do not altogether convince, because the style, though facile and dramatic, is not convincingly similar to that of 565. Still, it is easy to see the attraction of this hypothesis, especially if a closer match is not forthcoming. Meanwhile, a computer-based, quantitative study by van Kranenburg (2007) is fittingly inconclusive; he will not award the piece to either Kellner or Bach.[21]

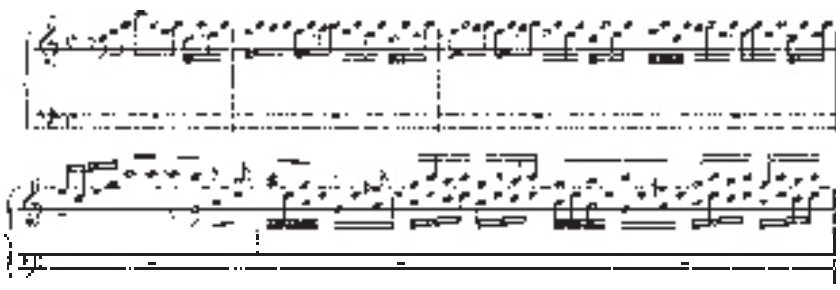
The exhaustive study on the authenticity of 565, by Rolf Dietrich Claus, concludes that the piece is not by Bach. This conclusion comes after considering the transmission of sources, the style and form of the work, and in short every aspect of the problem imaginable. It is a fascinating book, even though Claus does not propose a likely composer. He does, however, conclude that the chances of finding one are "not bad."[22]



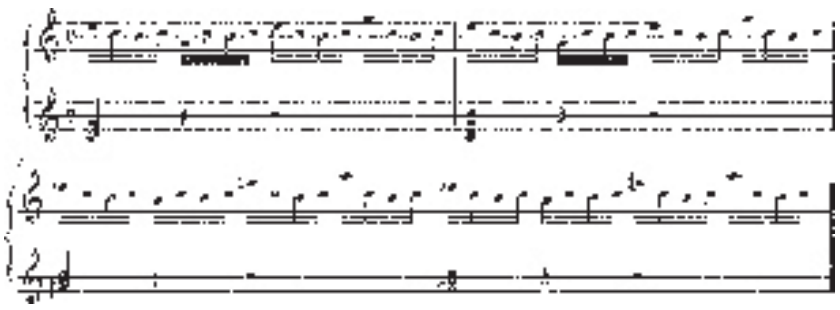
Example 1. *Divertimento* i, bars 1–3



Example 2. *Divertimento* i, bars 4–6



Example 3. *Divertimento* iii, first two entries



Example 4. *Divertimento* iii, 'solo' in 28–31

The question thus remains open. On the one hand, serious doubt has been growing regarding Bach's authorship, and there are strong reasons both to share it and to decide in the negative. The structural and stylistic reasons are many: the extensive use of octaves is unheard of in the free works, as are the harmonies of the final cadence; the counterpoint in the fugue is light and the voice-leading inconsistent. The subdominant answer, though logical and necessary, is atypical, and Bach nowhere (else) uses a theme of this nature. The work is also not found in autograph, but only in the hand of Johannes Ringk, via Kellner (would he really not claim authorship?); and so on. But on the other hand, if the question has gained traction, a proposed answer has not.

Cornelius Heinrich Dretzel

Recently, in studying some of the re-attributed keyboard works in the Bach catalogue, I encountered BWV 897, a *Prelude and Fugue in A Minor*. The prelude is now attributed to Cornelius Heinrich Dretzel (1697–1775), an organist highly respected in his native Nuremberg and a student of Bach.[23] I was forcefully struck by clear parallels to 565, in particular the Toccata, and investigated the piece more closely.

Cornelius Heinrich Dretzel came from a long line of musicians in his native city of Nuremberg. The most famous member of the family was his forebear Valentin (1578–1658). He almost certainly studied with J. S. Bach around the end of the latter's time in Weimar, probably in 1716–1717. He is mentioned twice in the *Bach-Dokumente* as a student of Bach. In one of these passages, C. D. F. Schubart writes:

> In Nuremberg . . . in the churches I heard students of the German Arion, the immortal Sebastian Bach, which made me feel in the first place how rare a good organist is. The names of Drezel, Bachhelbel, Löffeloth, Agrell, assuredly deserve more thanks and fame than the annals of music history have accorded them.[24]

Dretzel's career was discussed at length by Georg A. Will in 1802, who ended with this impassioned tribute:

> [He is] recognized as one of the greatest virtuosos of his time in performance and composition, so that his name and fame are very great even outside his fatherland. His compositions, especially in church music, will forever be accounted as treasures.[25]

The article in MGG (which calls him Georg) also quotes Schubart's commentary on him:

> . . . Drexel, a student of the great Sebastian Bach and indeed one of his best. He played the organ with great force, and especially understood registration, and composed with spirit for his instrument . . . he chose fugue themes for their songfulness, and handled them gracefully throughout . . . he understood counterpoint thoroughly . . . [26]

Dretzel served in the most famous churches of his native city, his career culminating in the prime position, that of St. Sebald. In two churches, St. Egidius and St. Sebald, he followed Wilhelm Hieronymous Pachelbel, scion of another family of Nuremberg musicians and prime representatives of the so-called Nuremberg School of organists. Nuremberg itself needs no introduction as a city devoted, not only to music, but to the arts of rhetoric and singing as well. Known for centuries as a cultural and commercial crossroads, its culture remains cosmopolitan, with an Italian influence, and its churches are both Lutheran and Catholic. Dretzel worked for churches of both confessions during his long career.

C. H. Dretzel died on May 7, 1775, and it is needless to add that his name and fame have not endured, even within his fatherland. Biographical entries shorten in every successive encyclopedia. In 1883, Fétis called him an 'organiste habile,' but had little else to say, even approximating his birth year.[27] Dretzel is forgotten today, probably because he published so little music. For years, he was remembered chiefly as the editor of a large collection of hymns, *Des evangelischen Zions musicalische Harmonie*.[28] Another composition, a brief *alla breve*, was published in Christoph Gottlieb von Murr's magazine *Der Zufriedene* in March, 1763.[29] (Murr was also a collector of Bach manuscripts.) A divertimento for keyboard was sometimes mentioned but believed lost.

Then, in 1969, the harpsichordist and scholar Isolde Ahlgrimm published an article dealing with a unique score in the National Széchényi Library in Budapest.[30] The work turned out to be Dretzel's lost keyboard work, titled both *Divertimento Armonico* and *Harmonische Ergözung*[31] [*sic*]. Its catalog number is Z 41.618; the score once belonged to Franz Joseph Haydn, and came to the library through the Esterházy family. The bilingual title page, and use of the word *Concerto/Concert*, led Ahlgrimm to suspect publication after Bach's *Italian Concerto* in 1735. (The title page may, if anything, refer to the *Musikalische Ergötzung*, published in 1695 by the most famous Nuremberger organist, Johann Pachelbel.) The work is only certainly datable to between 1719 and 1743, when Dretzel (as he states on the title page) was organist of St. Egidius.[32]

The second of the Divertimento's three movements, titled *adagiosissimo* in the original and *molto adagio* in Schmieder, was the same piece as BWV 897.1. Ahlgrimm's conclusion is that Dretzel did not appropriate the prelude from Bach, but composed it himself; and she ascribes "glory" to Dretzel for having written a work worthy of being attributed to Bach. The reader is advised to make a mental note of this last point: *Dretzel has fooled us before.*

On examining this readily available Dretzel piece, BWV 897.1, I was struck by features I associate with BWV 565, and with *no* other piece ascribed to Bach, or to anyone else. The feeling grew swiftly that this unlikely composer is the likeliest, by far, to have composed the famous work in question. Certainly, he offers us a far closer stylistic match than those previously suggested. Ahlgrimm is right in deducting this prelude from the Bach corpus. I suggest that, once deducted, it takes 565 with it.

The feeling continued to grow upon examining the balance of the *Divertimento*; first, the excerpts in the Ahlgrimm article, and then a digital scan of the entire composition, provided by the staff of the National Széchényi Library. If there is any influence at all from Bach's *Italian Concerto*, it is limited to the linguistic affectations of the title page—which are matched by a bilingual preface to the *Cortesissimo Lettore/Geneigter Leser*.[33] (Bach uses the phrase *Gemüths-Ergötzung* in his subtitle as well.) This preface refers to the score as "this first attempt" in publication (*questa prima prova/dieser erste Versuch*). Turning to the score, which is elegantly engraved, one notices first that the right-hand part is written in soprano clef throughout—like Ringk's manuscript of 565 and, according to Russell Stinson, interesting although not a definitive indicator of date of composition.[34] The suggested time frame would include the year of Dretzel's study in Weimar, and is also consistent with his identification of the *Divertimento* as his "prima prova." Perhaps it also argues for an earlier, rather than later, date for the composition of 565; Wolff notes other "archaic" features in Ringk's manuscript.[35]

The *Divertimento Armonico* consists of three movements: *allegro, adagiosissimo* [*sic*], and *fuga*. All three display significant stylistic congruence and closely parallel passages—one might say intertextuality—with 565. The most compelling resemblances come in the second and third movements, which form an *adagio-fuga* pair quite like 565 itself. Meanwhile, the difference in medium—organ versus harpsichord—is not particularly important in this context, as certain elements of keyboard idiom and many of style easily cross over.

Points of similarity

I believe that noting points of similarity between the two pieces—making concrete comparisons—is an appropriate method of demonstration. After all, it is the basis of Humphrey's article, cited above; and it is a straightforward way to synthesize a view both of the unfamiliar *Divertimento*, and the perhaps too-familiar 565.

I cannot offer a theory of provenance; I do not know how the manuscript came to Kellner, an indefatigable collector and traveler. Possibly von Murr, also a collector, was involved. Possibly the work was an early thunderbolt. Perhaps it postdates the *Divertimento* (on stylistic grounds, I believe this is likelier). We know we have no autograph of 565, but only a copied text that has engendered perplexity. The evidence for my thesis is drawn from the two works in question; with the additional *notandum* that all other known circumstances of time and place are, at least, not opposed to my thesis. In other words, I am aware of no specific evidence to the contrary of my idea, no adverse circumstances to account for; frankly, this is an advantage over the other arguments heretofore adduced. I believe that the composer of the *Divertimento Armonico* is also the composer of 565.

1. The opening of the *Divertimento* is quite unlike anything Bach ever wrote, in that the first phrase is repeated verbatim. Bach always varies his antecedent and consequent phrases, either harmonically or melodically. Never—even once, as far as I can see—does he simply say the same thing twice. It is still odder to find the second of three repetitions varied by diminution. [Example 1] It is needless to adduce examples of Bach's own practice. I might mention the opening of the *Italian Concerto*, the aforementioned *Capriccio*, the *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue*, among many others for examples of balanced, but not simply reiterated, phrase structure.

2. Throughout this first movement Dretzel shows a strong predilection for simple harmonizations in thirds and sixths; he will also do this in the fugue. Also, he often makes use of solo passages, including one that is virtually identical to an episode in the fugue of 565. [Examples 2, 3, and 4] Commentators have long used words like "trivial" to describe the similar harmonizations found in 565/ii.

3. The second movement, remarkably, is marked *adagiosissimo*. This peculiar word is best known to organists from the conclusion of BWV 622, "O Mensch, bewein," in *Orgelbüchlein*. The term is also found at the third movement of Bach's early *Capriccio*. MGG takes note of this occurrence by following it with an exclamation point in parentheses.[36]

This strange tempo designation occurs in early Bach, somewhat less-early Bach, C. H. Dretzel, and (to my knowledge) nowhere else.

4. Triple gestures: three mordents in 565, three large, full chords in *adagiosissimo*. In both cases, the commanding opening triplicate is followed by repetitious passagework and arpeggiation; and tension is introduced with a dominant harmony over a tonic bass. Basic to the style of both is a penchant for nearly obsessive, non-sequential, naive repetitions of a simple idea: compare bars 4 ff. in 565, toccata. [Example 5]

5. Frequent use of large chords of a widely varying number of notes. In Dretzel, up to ten notes in a chord (*adagiosissimo*, measure 16). In the Toccata, chordal structures of five through nine notes. Where else does Bach simply "lay on" in the manner found in the Toccata—regardless of instrument? (He certainly minds his voice-leading in the *Toccata in F*, in the *French Overture*, and in the *Italian Concerto*.) In Bach, a particularly thick sonority generally signals a beginning or ending, like the gong in a gamelan; in general, one can account for all voice parts. Both the *Divertimento* and 565 demur from the principle that neatness counts. The *allegro* and *fuga* have passages where, for dramatic purposes, handfuls of notes are called for—frequently set off with *fermate*. A prominent feature of the *Divertimento* is its frequent use of these, both as prolongations of chords and rests, and to mark the end of movements. Williams notes the presence of these in the Ringk ms. as raising questions of authenticity.[37]

It is true that thick sonorities of different size are found in the *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue*. However, that is virtually the sole similarity between the two pieces (see previous heading), and an uncommonly thick texture is more justifiable in harpsichord than in organ performance.

In these two examples, the "drama" chord is also in the third inversion. Compare the Toccata, bar 21. (This device occurs quite a bit more frequently in the Divertimento than it does in 565.) [Examples 6 and 7]

6. In both the *Divertimento* and 565, there is a marked preference for diminished harmonies; for diminished harmonies followed by their simple dominant-seventh versions; for third-inversion dominant harmonies, presented emphatically for rhetorical purposes; and for dominant harmonies over a tonic pedal or bass note.

7. There is a very strong resemblance between a run of diminished triplets in *adagiosissimo*, measure 6–7, and those in the Toccata, measure 22 ff. The figuration is for all practical purposes identical; in the Toccata, it is "harmonized" in two voices, but the pattern is virtually the same, including the occasional reversing of direction. [Example 8]

8. Several of the above examples also show Dretzel's pervasive use of bariolage: string idiom as a basic style feature. In both works, the fugue subject is nothing but bariolage (but see also Toccata, 12 ff.) The bariolage style is never quite so expressly invoked in the Bach canon (nor the public quite so overtly courted.)

The theme of the fugue, and its extremely simple handling (Example 3), may well strike the reader as reminiscent of the famous theme in D minor. Ahlgrimm's commentary on the *Divertimento* fugue is resonant:

> One sees . . . that Dretzel's music is composed after the taste of his day, aimed chiefly at the amateur; Italian influence is clearly discernible . . . It seems that Dretzel strove to show that a fugue can be accessible and joyous, so that it is not just for the amusement of the connoisseur.[38]

Note that the *Divertimento* fugue begins with an upward arpeggio, tonic to tonic. This device, though not particularly interesting in itself, allows for a real answer in the dominant. This is essential in order to preserve the punchiness of the repetitions of the fifth scale degree. In 565, however, the fugue subject begins directly on 5, a dramatic and effective choice, which also requires an unusual solution if it is to be maintained. Hence, the highly unusual subdominant solution. (This subdominant argument is appropriately echoed in the final plagal cadence.)

On the grounds that the fugue of 565 dramatically dispenses with the setup needed for a real answer, I incline to the theory that Dretzel composed it later than his *Divertimento*. I might adduce other stylistic grounds for my inclination, including the tightness of the Toccata versus the diffuse nature of the *adagiosissimo*; as well as the greater variety of treatment in the D-minor Fugue. Of course, the piece could have been a "bolt from the blue," composed in a fit of inspiration conferred by the ambience of Weimar and the proximity of Bach.

9. The use of a surprising cadence to set up a virtuosic passage or especially a coda: Dretzel, 21; Fugue, aforementioned *recitativo*, and the link from *adagiosissimo* to *presto*, 132–133. In both situations—one following immediately after another—*an* unexpected resolution hangs in the air, then dissolves into a shower of notes. [Example 9]

10. Final cadences. The cadence ending the *adagiosissimo* cannot simply be called a Phrygian or "Corelli" cadence, because the leading tone occurs, and there is a strong tritonic resolution in context of a "French Sixth" sonority. Nothing in the literature, of course, is quite comparable to the cadence of the fugue of 565. [Example 10]

One could, of course, continue to argue that 565 is a very unusual work by Bach, or accept (as I do) that it is a characteristic specimen of Dretzel. I do not think it is an *immature* work by a great composer, but rather a *mature* work by a *very good* composer.

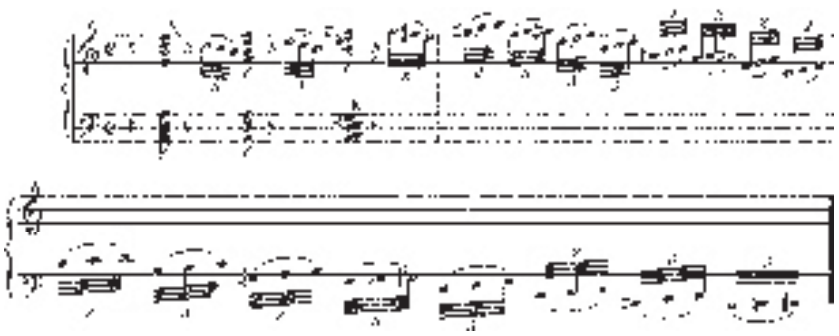
There are some specific issues with 565 that raise further doubt. One is the troubling first episode in the fugue—measures 34–39—uniquely atypical of Bach in its strangely-approached unisons and fifths, and the frequent noticeable fourths, fifths, and octaves. [Example 11]

Dretzel is similarly unconcerned when an empty unison or fifth, or a perfect fourth, falls on a strong beat. Refer to Example 3 for an example. There is also the following passage in the *allegro*. [Example 12]

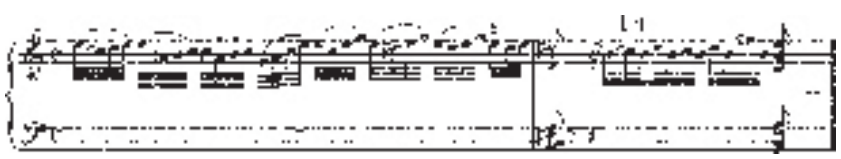
Also, there are rules concerning resolution of a tritone, and these are egregiously broken by the C–G movement in the pedal in measure 140–141. This is the problem alluded to earlier that "disappears" in the Williams violin arrangement. Note also the inconsistent number of voices and the questionable movement in the alto from B-flat to C-sharp. [Example 13]

These minor solecisms are unlikely to trouble the modern ear, but they are telling. I believe we are dealing with a composer to whom the grand gesture matters more than the fine points. Bach never trades one of these off for the other; he need not.

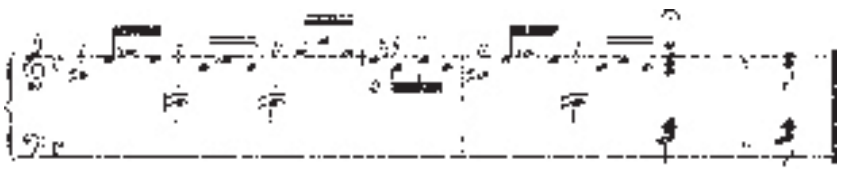
The Fugue of 565 is of tighter construction than its Toccata, but its peculiarities have also long been noted. Among these are a theme that prominently features the fifth scale degree; a solo annunciation of the theme in the pedal in the middle of the piece; a statement of the theme in the subtonic minor key; and in general the driven, almost monomaniacal character found throughout. Meanwhile, there are no signs of advanced counterpoint, such as stretto, augmentation, or the like. Where Bach is inclined to pile on artifice as he



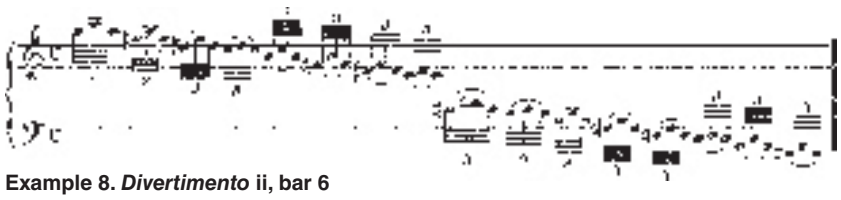
Example 5. *Divertimento* ii; opening of *adagiosissimo*



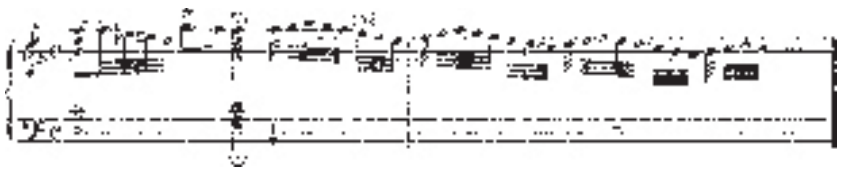
Example 6. *Divertimento* ii, *adagiosissimo*, bars 8–9



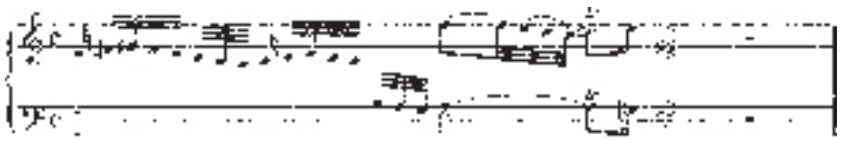
Example 7. *Divertimento* iii, bars 76–77



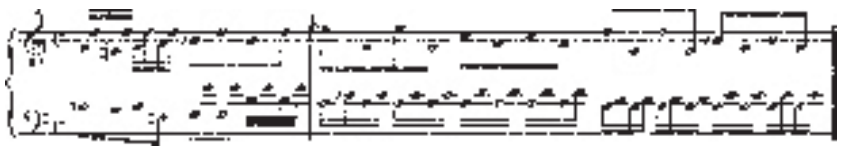
Example 8. *Divertimento* ii, bar 6



Example 9. *Divertimento* ii, bar 21

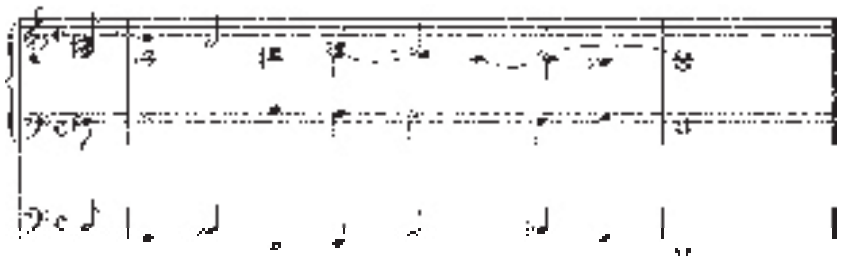


Example 10. *Divertimento* ii, bars 23–24



Example 11. BWV 565 ii, bars 34–36

Example 12. *Divertimento* i, bars 15–17



Example 13. BWV 565 ii, bars 140–end

reaches a conclusion, this piece devolves into passagework, linking it back to the toccata.[39] (The work, overall, seems to bear the hallmark of the classic threefold rhetorical plan of *introitus, centrum*, and *exitus*.) All of these features—save the pedal solo!—are to be found in the third movement of the *Divertimento*. The theme is always harmonized in thirds and sixths; the counterpoint is minimal; the episodes are either a solo line or a simple harmonic sequence. As to strange keys, the *fuga* of the *Divertimento* wanders (albeit very briefly) into B-flat minor.

Conclusion, performance notes

I alluded earlier to Williams' recent *J. S. Bach: A Life in Music*. His comments on 565 hit a double bull's-eye with the *Divertimento*: he points to "a few rhetorical gestures, thin harmonies, simple shape, much repetition and virtually no counterpoint."[40] This "thin" work also evokes universal delight; people who know nothing else about the organ know and thoroughly enjoy that piece. It must be admitted that this is not the usual reaction to the magnificently intelligent and often arcane Bach.

In a review of Williams's *The Life of Bach*, Jan-Piet Knijff speaks for many when he asks " . . . who on earth could have been the composer?"[41] It is precisely because this question is daunting—*who on earth could have been the composer?*—that an answer is delayed. We have had to choose: to remain faithful to an unhappy marriage, or to start all over again in the treacherous world of dating. Finding a likely candidate is as much a matter of good luck as anything else.

Still, we knew what we were looking for. We sought a German composer with some Italian blood, strong technique, and a recognizable, facile voice; someone from a rhetorical community other than the North German. We sought someone who composed to a popular, gentlemanly taste; no fatiguing artifice of counterpoint, please, and arresting cadences are a plus. We needed someone who is not Bach: early Bach, late Bach, or Bach with a few bits left over. We needed someone who was a lesser and different composer, and probably younger; possessing an audience, an organ bench of note, and a finished identity in his own right. The work is neither early nor late; it is right on schedule. *Whose* schedule is the only question.

Cornelius Heinrich Dretzel fills these criteria remarkably neatly, and what we possess of his music is cut from the very same cloth as 565. Once we see the possibility that a now-forgotten organist from Nuremberg is the likely composer, the pieces show a striking inclination to fall into place. Perhaps all that stands in the way is our own surprise.

A note on performance. If 565 is southern German in origin, as I believe it is, it may best be realized with less grandeur and *Angst* than has been typical. One might seek smaller and lighter South-German organs; not a "little village church in Saxony" per Williams,[42] but an exquisite city church in Bavaria, with a silver-toned organ, few reeds, and an Italian inflection. Playing the Toccata and Fugue in a dignified, lyrical, and fluent way lightens and clarifies the piece in a way that works for this writer.[43] Fox-Lafriche is on the right track when he argues for the piece's "brilliance, lightness, intimacy, and grace."[44]

It may help to visualize some of the more remarkable organ cases from this region: gleaming in white rococo splendor, toothsome as a dessert; but offering a modest, simple, clear, tonal design. Like 565, these organs make a magnificent show but contain surprisingly few ingredients—the equivalent of egg whites and sugar. *Dessert*, in fact, is probably the perfect gustatory metaphor for the composition in question.

If one is prepared to entertain the idea that a once-famous and now-forgotten composer wrote the greatest "hit" the organ has ever known, a door opens to a more egalitarian, less Bach-centric view of German organ culture. We might examine a successful popular approach to the instrument and the musical public that is not entirely attributable to a learned Bach, or to the Bach of hagiography. Pierre Boulez reminds us: "History is not a well-oiled machine that advances smoothly along rails composed of masterpieces . . . "[45] The masterpieces themselves, and the posthumous careers of their creators, do not always advance smoothly on rails of due attribution.

Perhaps C. H. Dretzel was, in popular terms, a "one-hit wonder." Perhaps more of his compositions await rediscovery. I am left wondering about what we may have lost. In any case, it could well be that Nuremberg is home to another, and marvelously unanticipated, *Preislied*. ■

*The author thanks the Germanisches National Museum, Nuremberg, as well as the Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, Budapest, for their prompt and professional assistance. Otto Krämer of Straelen and Leonardo Ciampa of Boston assisted with German and Italian languages. Bill Powers assisted with research.

Notes

1. Peter Williams, "BWV 565: A Toccata in D Minor for Organ by J. S. Bach?" *Early Music* (July 1981), 330–337.
2. Christoph Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), 169. "Bach's Toccata in D Minor and the Issue of Its Authenticity," *Perspectives in Organ Playing and Musical Interpretation* (New Ulm, MN: Heinrich Fleischer Festschrift Committee, Martin Luther College, for the Gesellschaft der Orgelfreunde, 2002), 85–107.
3. Williams, "BWV 565."
4. Bruce Fox-Lefriche, "The Greatest Violin Sonata that J. S. Bach Never Wrote," *Strings* (October 2004), 44–55.
5. Mark Argent, "Stringing Along," *The Musical Times*, 141/1872 (Autumn 2000), 16–20, 22–23. (Also available as "J. S. Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor (BWV 565) Revisited," from www.markargent.com.)
6. Eric Lewin Altschuler, "Were Bach's Toccata and Fugue BWV 565 and the Ciacona from BWV 1004 Lute Pieces?" *The Musical Times* (Winter 2005), 77–86.
7. Bernhard Billeter, "Bachs Toccata und Fuge d-moll für Orgel BWV 565: ein Cembalowerk?" *Die Musikforschung* 50/1 (1997), 77–80.
8. David Humphreys, "The D Minor Toccata BWV 565," *Early Music* 10/2 (April 1982), 216–217.
9. Rolf Dietrich Claus, *Zur Echtheit von Toccata und Fugue d-moll BWV 565* (Cologne: Verlag Dohr, 1998), 123.
10. Peter Williams, *The Organ Music of J. S. Bach* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 454.
11. Wolff, *Learned Musician* and *Perspectives on Organ Playing*.
12. Williams, "BWV 565," 332.
13. Peter Williams, *The Life of Bach*, "Musical Lives" series (Cambridge, 2004), footnote 11, 161. *J. S. Bach: A Life in Music* (Cambridge, 2007), 82.
14. William, *Organ Music of Bach*, 155 ff.
15. Fox-Lefriche, "Greatest Violin Sonata," 53.
16. Ibid., 53.
17. Note by Elisa M. Welch, Fox-Lefriche, "Greatest Violin Sonata," 54.
18. Fox-Lafriche, "Greatest Violin Sonata," 50.
19. Ibid., 53.
20. Humphreys, "D Minor Toccata."
21. Peter van Kranenburg, "On Measuring Musical Style: The Case of Some Disputed Organ Fugues in the J. S. Bach (BWV) Catalog." Online, author-preferred version via author's website, http://www.lodebar.nl/pvk/. Originally published as "Assessing Disputed Attributions for Organ Fugues in the J. S. Bach (BWV) Catalog," *Computing in Musicology* 15 (2007–9).
22. Claus, *Zur Echtheit*.
23. There are several references to Dretzel in connection with Bach in *Bach-Dokumente* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1972), volume 3, and in other sources, albeit displaying variants of his name. Dretzel is also usually included in lists of Bach's students during the latter's final year at Weimar.
24. Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart, "Bach-Schüler in Nürnberg," *Bach-Dokumente*, vol. 3, article 837, 330.
25. Georg Andreas Will, *Nürnbergisches Gelehrte-Lexicon*, ed. Christian C. Nopitsch (Altdorf, 1802), 251–252.
26. Schubart, *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik*, 1806, quoted in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2001), Personenteil 5, 1411. See also *Bach-Dokumente* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1972), volume 3, article 903a, 411. Schubart refers to Dretzel as 'Drexel,' leading some to confuse him with the Drexel who was organist in Augsburg–even though this man was born in 1758.
27. F-J Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens* (Paris, 1883), 58. He can only give Dretzel's birth as "au commencement du dix-huitième siècle."
28. See, *inter alia*, Johann Georg Meusel, *Lexicon der vom Jahr 1750 bis 1800 verstorbenen teutschen Schriftsteller* (Leipzig, 1803), 426–427.
29. The final page of the March 17, 1763 issue of this little magazine contains a short piece called "Alla Breve dal S^re. D." It is a light, forgettable work in two voices; even here, though, elements of style such as facile dialogue and perfect intervals on strong beats can be seen.
30. Isolde Ahlgrimm, "Cornelius Heinrich Dretzel, der Autor des J. S. Bach zugeschribenen Klavierwerkes BWV 897," *Bach-Jahrbuch* 1969, 67–77.
31. *Ergötzung*: from *ergötzen*, to regale or feast (someone).
32. I am grateful to the eminent Bach scholar Daniel Melamed of Indiana University for his feedback on my research. In particular, he has pointed out a number of occurrences of the word *Ergötzung* in musical publications of this period. Its use seems to be linked to the Liebhaber side of the Kenner/Liebhaber divide: indicating a piece written for general enjoyment, rather than for the delectation of the connoisseur.
33. It is also true that the allegro movement uses a ritornello form, and thus is to that extent superficially similar to the first movement of the *Italian Concerto*.
34. Russell Stinson, "Toward a Chronology of Bach's Instrumental Music: Observations on Three Keyboard Works," *Journal of Musicology*, Volume 7, Number 4 (Autumn 1989), 443.
35. Christoph Wolff, "Bach's Toccata in D Minor and the Issue of Its Authenticity," *Perspectives in Organ Playing and Musical Interpretation* (New Ulm, MN: Heinrich Fleischer Festschrift Committee, Martin Luther College, for the Gesellschaft der Orgelfreunde, 2002), 90.
36. *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (MGG), Personenteil 5, 1411.
37. Williams, *Organ Music of Bach*, 155.
38. Ahlgrimm, *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 72, 73, translated by the author.
39. It is true that Bach's youthful work often places passagework at the end of a fugue; those works, however, invariably display hallmarks of North German style and less polish.
40. Williams, *J. S. Bach: A Life in Music*, 82.
41. Jan-Piet Knijff, review of *The Life of Bach*, *Bach Notes*, number 3 (spring 2005), 8.
42. Williams, "BWV 565," 330.
43. In this connection, it is useful to mention that the issue of short bottom octaves (without low C-sharp) would not have come up, in particular at the Egidienkirche, which was rebuilt around the time Dretzel took up his post there, succeeding the younger Pachelbel.
44. Fox-Lafriche, "Greatest Violin Sonata," 53.
45. Pierre Boulez, "Aesthetics and the Fetishists," *Orientations*, tr. Martin Cooper (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 35.

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