

J. C. BACH'S SYMPHONIES FOR DOUBLE ORCHESTRA

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J. C. Bach's three symphonies for double orchestra, Opus 18, Nos. 1, 3 and 5¹), occupy a somewhat special, one might even say secluded position in the composer's collected symphonic production, in spite of the fact that, to a modern ear, they are the most pretentious, if not the best of all his symphonies. There are a number of reasons for this, the following being the most likely in the present writer's opinion:

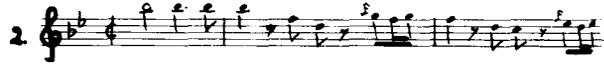
- a. Among the c. 50 symphonies²) by J. C. Bach, these are the only ones that are scored for double orchestra.
- b. The works were not printed until 1781, by which time Bach's fame was rapidly decreasing; this is probably the reason why none of the late 18th century critics even mentions these three symphonies.
- c. Whether under the title of *Overture* or *Symphony* the scoring for double orchestra has caused some doubt as to the musical genre to which one ought to refer these symphonies. Are they actually symphonies, are they concertos, or do they belong to some hybrid form?

On the following pages the problems – bibliographical and musical – related to these three works will be discussed.

Dating and dissemination

It is a well-known fact that the dating of 18th century symphonies can be based almost exclusively on bibliographical or other external factors, whereas intrinsic, stylistic criteria must be taken into consideration only with a great deal of caution. In the case of a printed work – as here – we must often be content if we can fix the latest possible date of publication, a date which, of course, tells nothing about when the work was actually *composed*.

As mentioned above, the three symphonies for double orchestra were printed among those of *Opus 18*. To make reference easier, the incipits of all six are given below:

1.		Double orchestra
2.		Overture to "Lucio Silla"
3.		Double orchestra (Overture to "Endimione")
4.		
5.		Double orchestra
6.		

The symphonies for double orchestra are to be found in the following prints:

- a. Six Grand Overtures, three for a single and three for a Double Orchestre, for Violins Hautboys, Flutes, Clarinetts, Horns, Tenor and Bass
Opera XVIII (London, William Forster)
The symphonies for double orchestra are nos. 1, 3 and 5 of the print.
- b. Two Grand Overtures, one for a Single and one for a Double Orchestre . . .
Opera XVIII (London, William Forster).
Under this title - in which only three words have been changed from the title quoted under a. - Forster issued three collections with two symphonies in each, i.e. nos. 1 and 2, nos. 3 and 4, and nos. 5 and 6, respectively³).
The pagination shows that these prints were made from the same plates as print a.
- c. Deux Simphonies, la Premiere a Grand Orchestre la Seconde a Double Orchestre . . . Libro I (II)⁴) (Berlin, J.J. Hummel).
Plate numbers 508 and 509. All the known copies of this print consist of symphonies nos. 2 and 1.
- d. A favorite Overture Composed for two Orchestres . . . Adapted for two performers on one Piano-Forte or Harpsichord by C.J. Baumgarten. (London, William Forster).
Plate number 29. Symphony no. 1.

From what we know about Hummel's business morality we can be quite certain that his edition is a pirate edition, based on one of the small Forster prints. Hummel's plate numbers unambiguously indicate the year 1781, which year accordingly must also be established as the latest possible year for the Forster prints a. and b. The piano adaption, quoted as d, is probably from 1782, since

the title page refers to the composer as "*Late music Master to her Majesty*" (Bach died on 1st January 1782).

None of these prints seems to have been particularly well known on the Continent, and we do not find any reference to the symphonies for double orchestra, which might otherwise have interested the large Continental audience because of the novelty of their scoring. Of the six symphonies of Opus 18, Breitkopf's thematic catalogues⁶⁾ only cite no. 2 and no. 6, both for single orchestra, and the facts that the Breitkopf catalogue from 1782, 1783 and 1784 does not mention Opus 18 as such, confirms our assumption that it could not have been issued earlier than 1781.

In the earliest list of J. C. Bach's works by J. N. Forkel from 1783⁷⁾ - a list that came to be considered as authoritative for the next 50-75 years - we do not find any mention of Opus 18 at all; Gerber's dictionary⁸⁾ from 1790-92 has clearly used Forkel's list, and not until the edition of 1812-14 does Gerber mention the symphonies for double orchestra with a reference to Burney: "Auch Burney erwähnt gelegentlich mehrerer seiner Kompositionen für 2 Orchester mit Ruhm, ohne aber sie weiter kenntlich zu machen". Among 20th-century scholars who have dealt with J. C. Bach's symphonies, only Fritz Tutenberg⁹⁾ goes into some detail about these works.

Whereas we can be fairly certain that Opus 18 was *printed* in the year 1781, it is much more difficult to fix the exact year (or years) of *composition*. There is no doubt that some of the symphonies which Forster printed in 1781 had been written much earlier: no. 2 is the overture to the opera "*Lucio Silla*", performed in Mannheim 1774¹⁰⁾, and no. 3 is the overture to Bach's Italian cantata, "*Endimione*", performed in London as early as 1772¹¹⁾; and finally Michel Brenet¹²⁾ states that the symphonies from Opus 18 were performed in Paris in 1774. Also in this connection the symphonies Opus 18 are almost unique: no trace of any Parisian edition of them has so far been found, in spite of the fact that almost all of the other printed symphonies by Bach also exist in French editions. From many sources we know that Bach was a great name in Paris long before he wrote his opera "*Amadis des Gaules*" for the French capital; as will be shown later, Paris might even have been an indirect inspiration for the three symphonies for double orchestra.

Summing up, we can state that the three symphonies for double orchestra were composed between 1770 and 1781, that they were not printed until 1781, that no collected edition of them appeared on the Continent, and that they seem to have caused little or no interest among the public and the critics. It is a characteristic detail in this connection that in Robert Sondheimer's *Die Theorie der Sinfonie* (Leipzig 1925) we find no reference to them. The only one of the Opus 18 symphonies which seems to have become really well known is no. 2, the overture to "*Lucio Silla*" in B-flat major, which is today probably the symphony by Bach to be found most frequently on concert programmes.

Genre and models

Bach was not a pioneer in that he created new forms of music or experimented with the musical material. On the contrary, he knew what the audience wanted and that was what he gave them, thus exploiting the favourable situation with its steadily increasing group of potential buyers of and listeners to music. The simple fact is that within the current musical vocabulary. J. C. Bach was a better composer than most of his contemporaries, primarily because of the easy flow of this music, his sensuous melodic lines, and the clear-cut structure of the phrases. When, therefore, one finds among his host of traditionally built-up symphonies, quartets, trios and sonatas, three symphonies with the unusual scoring for double orchestra, one cannot help starting to look for earlier works which Bach might have taken as models, or for some particular external circumstance which might have dictated this rather unusual instrumentation. In the scanty literature on J. C. Bach's symphonies two different explanations are put forward: one is that these symphonies stem from the general predilection of the time to write for any kind of duo-combination – duos for two flutes or two violins, piano-duets either for two performers at one piano or for two pianos, etc., all genres to which J. C. Bach contributed with several works. However, these genres are conditioned more by social than by purely musical considerations; contrary to the increasing professionalism of musical life a new demand arose for easy and simple amateur music which could be played privately and at social gatherings without the aid of professional musicians. Such diverting and sometimes rather superfluous music, however, is far from the spirit of the three symphonies in question. It goes without saying that they were written for professional musicians and performed at some of the famous subscription concerts, arranged by Bach and his friend C. F. Abel during more than fifteen years.

The second explanation suggests that Bach found his inspiration in Handel's *concerti grossi*, and this is probably much nearer the truth, even though it may not be the whole truth. It has been stressed again and again by scholars dealing with this period that baroque elements in music survived in England much longer than on the Continent: "England war eines der wenigen Länder, in denen das echte Concerto grosso die Invasion der Mannheimer Sinfonik überlebt hat", as Charles L. Cudworth puts it¹³); this can be seen both in Handel's own long-lasting influence and from the fact that works by Continental baroque composers were still being printed in England in the sixties, at a time when new and different trends has become dominant on the Continent. This change in style and preference, which is clearly mirrored in the French music publishers' catalogues¹⁴ through the fifties and sixties, does not reach England until about a decade or so later and even then its impact is far less here than in Germany and France. The strongest of these baroque elements in English midcentury music, no doubt, is the concerto or the *concertante* principle; both the specific English genre, the organ concerto¹⁵), and the enduring popularity of Handel's Vivaldi's and Corelli-

li's concertos testify to this. An amalgamation of this baroque principle and the new symphonic style is the so-called "*concerted symphony*", of which J. C. Bach wrote at least fifteen¹⁶).

If amongst this repertoire we look for direct models for Bach's double-orchestra scoring, we can only single out two such instances: the five concertos for double orchestra by Vivaldi (either with or without solo instruments), and the "*Conversation Symphony*" by the English composer John Marsh.

Vivaldi's concertos appeared in quite a few English prints, first of all by John Walsh, but also by other English printers such as Peter Thompson, John Jones, Longman and Co., and Randall and Abell as late as about 1770¹⁷). The five Vivaldi concertos¹⁸) "*in due cori*", however, were probably not printed at all and do not seem to have been known in England; furthermore, the scoring in these concertos is very stereotyped as to the way the music is divided between the two orchestras: in all five cases the instruments of the two orchestras are identical and the composer does not aim at any differentiation of sonority. That Bach was inspired by these Vivaldi concertos, therefore, seems out of the question.

Among the 158 symphonies by local English composers quoted by Charles L. Cudworth in his paper "English Eighteenth Century Symphonies"¹⁹) only one is for double orchestra, namely the following symphony by the amateur, John Marsh: "A Conversation sinfonie, for two orchestras, upon a new plan; the whole being compleat in the following parts, viz. two violins, two tenors, three basses, two hautbous, two French horns and kettle drums". J. Preston. London²⁰). The present writer has not had access to this work, but since the print is dated "1784"²¹) it also can be excluded as a model for the works by Bach.

The only explanation then for the three Bach symphonies under consideration seems to be this: in his last symphonic opus J. C. Bach consciously introduced the *concertante* principle on a larger scale than hitherto, thus combining the experience acquired from his concerted symphonies, composed through the seventies, with the purely symphonic idiom, at the same time creating something new based on a technique that was popular with the public. Bach's relations with Paris are so abundantly documented that it is highly likely that the enormous - if short-lived - popularity of the *sinfonia concertante* in Paris, which led the French publishers to issue scores of such works by foreign composers, may also have had an effect upon the cosmopolitan Bach.

One final group of works by J. C. Bach ought to be mentioned as a possible preliminary study for the double-orchestra technique, namely the six quintets printed as Opus 11²²) by Welcker, Hummel and Sieber about 1773-74; here again we find a splitting up of the instruments into two groups, one consisting of flute and oboe, the other of violin and viola, with the cello acting as the bass instrument of both groups. This can be studied in almost every movement of the set, most clearly perhaps, in the *Menuetto con Variatione* of the first quintet in C major.

Musical analysis

The instrumentation of the three symphonies is as follows:

Orchestra I: strings, 2 oboes, bassoon and 2 horns.

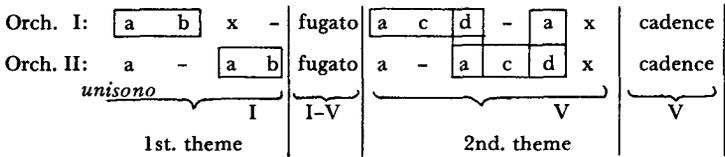
Orchestra II: strings and two flutes.

The horns are silent in the slow second movements.

As can be seen, the clarinets, mentioned on the title page of Forster's prints, are missing. In actual fact it seems that only one of the symphonies from Opus 18 had clarinets, i.e. No. 2²³), the overture to "Lucia Silla", which is the most lavishly instrumentated symphony by Bach, probably due to its function as overture originally written for the performance of the opera in Paris. On the whole it must be stated that the instrumentation, and especially the role played by the wind instruments, is less advanced in these symphonies for double orchestra than in so many of Bach's earlier symphonies; only in a very few instances²⁴) do the wind instruments take the lead, and most of the time they merely fill out the harmonies with long notes. This is remarkable, since Bach was famous for his treatment of the winds, but it looks as if here the composer is so much occupied with the new technique involving two sonorities set up against one another that he did not want a more subtle differentiation within each of these groups.

In connection with the instrumentation, one more point ought to be mentioned: the Darmstadt manuscript of "Edimione"²⁵), which is the only known manuscript copy of Opus 18,5, differs from Forster's print in one respect: apart from the instruments mentioned above, orchestra II also has two "*Trombe Lunghe*"; this designation for trumpets is not to be found in any of the standard reference works on musical instruments. A possible explanation for the word "*Lunghe*" is that the copyist wants to stress that the trumpet in question is a "*German*" trumpet in D and not the "*short*" trumpet in G which Johann Ernst Altenburg calls "*englische Trompete*"²⁶). The addition of these trumpet parts to the score causes some changes in the horn parts of the first orchestra as found in the printed editions, which in the Darmstadt manuscript are divided between the horns of orchestra I and the trumpets of orchestra II. That one ought to allow a certain weight to this Darmstadt scoring is indicated by the fact that here we have a full score of the cantata "Endimione" which was probably made for the Mannheim performance of 1774, at a time when Bach seems to have been in rather frequent and close contact with the Palatinate capital.

If we compare these three symphonies with the more or less contemporary concerted symphonies one thing becomes obvious at once; in the double orchestra symphonies none of the orchestras has its own motivic or thematic material; the splitting up into two orchestras is not founded on difference in material but on difference in sonority. All the thematic material is either introduced by the tutti or by orchestra I, and not until this has happened does the second orchestra take over the material in question. This is illustrated by the following outline of the exposition of the first movement in Opus 18,1:



No doubt Opus 18,5 is the symphony of the set in which the *concertante* principle is most successful; the somewhat mechanical impression with which one is left after listening to the two first symphonies is totally lacking here. The first movement of this symphony is conceived in such a way that the purely thematic parts are orchestrated as "quasi" solos, whereas the non-thematic parts which come in between these well-defined themes are *tutti*. This principle is further stressed by heavy authentic cadences after every single section of the movement.

In his well-known book, Fritz Tutenberg²⁷⁾ rightly stressed the importance of the ritornello principle in connection with J. C. Bach's symphonies, especially their first movements. In the three symphonies under consideration we also find this typical mixture of ritornello form and sonata form:

In *Opus 18,1*, the dominant section and second theme is introduced by a quotation of the four opening bars of the first theme (letter a in the outline given above); thereafter these four opening bars function as a counterpoint to the last part of the contrasting theme. This combination of first and second themes is found again near the end of the middle section of the movement, this time in c-minor (the movement is in E flat major). Such an underlining of the sixth degree near the end of the "development" section is cited as a standard procedure in one of Fritz Tutenberg's four types of early symphony ("Wiener Ritornell Sinfonie"²⁸⁾).

The first movement of *Opus 18,3* is somewhat special in that it combines binary with ternary form; in the first part of the movement (bars 1-65) we find the normal exposition with three different themes: the opening *tutti* theme, the second contrasting theme in the dominant, and the concluding epilogue in the dominant. Both the contrasting themes are antiphonally divided between the two orchestras (example 1-3).

Fritz Tutenberg²⁹⁾, who apparently only allows two themes in a sonata-movement exposition, writes about the two themes in the dominant: "Und nun wird der wie so oft bei Bach vom Vordersatz getrennte Nachsatz gebracht . . . ein durchaus selbständiges thematisches Gebilde . . . , das deutlich als Abschluss des zweiten Themas fühlbar wird". To the present writer it seems more in accordance with the music itself to look upon the movement as having three functionally different and autonomous themes. The second part of the movement (from bar 66 to the end) serves both as the development and the recapitulation:

Example 1. Opus 18,3, first movement, bars 1-7.

Example 2. Opus 18,3, first movement, bars 18-25.

Example 3. Opus 18,3, first movement, bars 51-59

it is introduced by a unison quotation of the first theme, like a *ritornello*, this theme then forming the basis for the next 19 bars through the keys of A, e, b, G, b, G, A and D (example 4); when the key of D major has been reached (bar 88) the rest of the movement is a literal recapitulation of the first part with the exception of the six opening bars that made up the material for the previous development. In other words, the last bar of example 4 glides into the actual recapitulation without any pause or cadence.



Example 4. Opus 18,3, first movement, bars 66-88, cello and bass.

The last symphony for double orchestra, *Opus 18,5*, is not only the longest of Bach's symphonies proper (i.e. not including the concerted symphonies), but it is also one of the symphonies whose first movement comes nearest to the sonata form procedure as we find it, for instance, in many of Mozart's symphonies and sonatas: an exposition with the "compulsary" contrast of key, a development section that begins - after a general pause - with an impressive *fugato* between the orchestras and proceeds to a quotation of parts of the second theme in the subdominant; after a cadence in c sharp minor (again the sixth degree) another motive from the second theme is developed, and after a concluding tutti the violins lead, over a pedal b, to the recapitulation; in this latter part the sections of the second theme, which were used in the development, are left out, a procedure which is also to be found in other symphonies by Bach.

One final characteristic of this symphony ought to be mentioned, viz. the very beginning of the first movement. By far the majority of the symphonies of this period (from about 1740 to about 1780) either begin with a fanfare-like triadic opening or with a stepwise *unison* opening - in both cases *forte*. As to the preference for the triadic beginning, this has been explained by reference to the limited capability of the brass instruments: if the composer wanted these instruments to take part in the beginning of the work in their low or middle range, this beginning had to be melodically built around the triad; the obvious effect of such a *forte* opening must also have played an important role. One need only glance at the thematic index of Hugo Riemann's volumes of Mannheim symphonists³⁰) to realize how this kind of introduction dominates the repertoire.

Of 41 symphonies by J. C. Bach that have been available for the present study, only two begin *piano*; one is the following symphony Opus 9,2³¹) from about 1770 (example 5):



Example 5. Opus 9,2, first movement, bars 1-7.

The score reveals that this is the beginning of one of the well-known "Mannheimer-crescendoes".

The other symphony with a *piano* beginning is Opus 18,5 (example 6):

Example 6. Opus 18,5, first movement, bars 1-8

Here we have a true, harmonized *piano* theme right from the beginning, far removed in its effect from the traditional way of introducing a symphony as sketched above; it rather suggests the famous *piano* beginning of Mozart's g minor symphony (KV. 550). Bach's audience must have felt somewhat puzzled listening to these introductory bars!

Summing up, we can say that these three symphonies for double orchestra by J.C. Bach neither show anything new as to the exploitation of the instruments nor do they contribute any new formal procedures to the vast repertoire of 18th century symphonies. On the other hand, it ought to be stressed that both in their unique status as works for double orchestra and in the handling of the traditional musical material they stand out as the summit of their composer's collected symphonic output, the scope and musical individuality of which is still awaiting a comprehensive treatment.

Notes

1. Modern editions: Opus 18,1, Edition Peters Nr. 4366, ed. Fritz Stein, 1931; Opus 18,3, Edition Peters Nr. 4330, ed. Fritz Stein, 1930; Opus 18,5, *Das Erbe deutscher Musik*, Band 30, ed. Fritz Stein, 1956.
2. See thematic index in Charles Sanford Terry, *John Christian Bach*, London 1929, second edition with a foreword by H. C. Robbins Landon, London 1967. The exact number of symphonies by J. C. Bach has not yet been established. About 75 symphonies (not including the fifteen concerted symphonies) are known under the name of J. C. Bach, and of these at least 50 are genuine Bach works.
3. RISM, A. I, page 172, item no. B 243 is somewhat misleading about these Forster prints, by only mentioning one print and saying that it contains Opus 18,2 and 4; symphonies nos. 2, 4 and 6 are to be found under this title in Århus Statsbibliotek, Denmark, and under the same title no. 1 can be found in Musikaliska Akademien, Stockholm; the pagination of these copies clearly shows that the contents of these prints are as stated under print b, and not as stated by RISM.
4. The copy of this print, preserved in Per Brahes Gymnasiet, Jönköping, Sweden, shows that the two title pages were actually printed from the same plates, and that the printed "Libro I" has been changed to "Libro II" by means of a handwritten stroke. This is the explanation why the title pages of both symphonies carry the plate number "508 & 509" whereas the music itself of the first symphony carries the number "508" and that of the second the plate number "509"!
5. See: Cari Johansson, *J. J. and B. Hummel. Music-Publishing and Thematic Catalogues*, Stockholm 1972, Vol. I, p. 94 and Vol. II, F 19.
6. *The Breitkopf Thematic Catalogue . . . 1762-1787*, ed. Barry S. Brook, New York 1966. See also: Niels Krabbe, *J. C. Bach's Symphonies and the Breitkopf Thematic Catalogue* (in: *Festschrift Jens Peter Larsen*, København 1972, p. 233-254).
7. J. N. Forkel, *Musikalischer Almanach für Deutschland auf das Jahr 1782*, p. 149 ff.
8. E. L. Gerber, *Historisch-biographisches Lexicon der Tonkünstler*. . . , Leipzig 1790-92.
9. Fritz Tutenberg, *Die Sinfonik Johann Christian Bachs*, Wolfenbüttel-Berlin, 1928.
10. According to O. G. T. Sonneck, *Library of Congress, Catalogue of Opera Librettos Printed Before 1800*, Vol. I, 1914, the opera "Lucio Silla" (Schatz 529) was performed at Mannheim Hoftheater already in 1773.
11. Ludwig Landshoff, in his edition of "12 Konzert- und Opern-Arien" by J. C. Bach (Edition Peters 4319), states that "Endimione" was performed at the Court Theatre of Ogersheim as early as 1770. This piece of information is repeated by Heinrich Miesner in his *corrigenda* to Terry's book in *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft*, 16, 1934, p. 182 ff. Of course, we cannot be sure that the same overture was used at the various performances. The manuscript copy in the Hessische Landes und Hochschulbibliothek, Darmstadt (Mus.ms. 57), which is the only complete score of the cantata (including the overture), carries no date.
12. Un fils du grand Bach a Paris 1778-79, (in: *Guide Musical*, 1902)
13. MGG, Vol. 3, "England. E", column 1399.
14. See: Cari Johansson, *French Music Publishers' Catalogues of the Second Half of the 18th Century*, 2 vols. Stockholm 1955, and Jens Peter Larsen, "Das musikalische Stilwandel um 1750 im Spiegel der zeitgenössischen Pariser Verlagskataloge" (*"Musik*

- und Verlag. Karl Vötterle zum 65. Geburtstag, Kassel 1968, p. 410-423).
15. See: Charles L. Cudworth, "The English Organ Concerto" (*The Score*, Sept. 1953, p. 51-60).
 16. See thematic index in Joseph A. White, *The Concerted Symphonies of John Chr. Bach*, University of Michigan 1957 (University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan).
 17. Peter Ryom, cand.mag., kindly provided the material for the information about the English Vivaldi prints.
 18. Peter Ryom, *Verzeichnis der Werke Antonio Vivaldis, (RV), kleine Ausgabe*, København 1974: RV 581-585.
 19. *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association LXXVIII*, Appendix, London 1953.
 20. The only known copy of this print is kept in Manchester, Public Libraries. The name of the composer is given as "J. Sharm", which is an anagram for J. Marsh.
 21. British Union Catalogue of Early Music, ed. E.B. Schnapper, 1957, p. 655.
 22. *Das Erbe deutscher Musik*, vol. 3, ed. Rudolf Steglich, 1935.
 23. Fritz Stein's remark (*Das Erbe deutscher Musik*, vol. 30, p. 199): "Die im Titel des Opus XVIII genannten Klarinetten haben keine eigenen Stimmhefte, sie gingen also zweifellos mit den Oboen", is not quite correct; the copy of Forster's print in Århus Statsbibliotek, Denmark, actually has two separate clarinet parts.
 24. e.g. the "minore" part of the third movement of Opus 18,5.
 25. Mus. ms. 57, Hessische Landes und Hochschulbibliothek.
 26. J. E. Altenburg, *Versuch einer Anleitung zur heroisch-musikalischen Trompeter- und Paukenkunst*, Halle 1795, p. 12 and p. 85-86. See also MGG, Vol. 13, column 787.
 27. See note 9.
 28. Fritz Tutenberg, op.cit. p. 57.
 29. Op. cit. p. 306.
 30. *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Bayern*, Vol. III,1, 1902; Vol. VII,2, 1906; and Vol. VIII,2, 1907; ed. Hugo Riemann.
 31. Edition Eulenburg 522, ed. Fritz Stein, 1935.

RESUMÉ

J.C. Bachs tre symfonier for dobbeltorkester, opus 18 nr. 1, 3 og 5, var tilsyneladende mindre kendt og udbredt i samtiden end Bachs øvrige trykte symfonier til trods for deres instrumentatoriske særstilling og kvalitative overlegenhed i forhold til så mange andre af Bachs værker.

De seks symfonier opus 18 blev trykt hos den engelske forlægger William Forster, formodentlig i 1781, året før Bachs død, men herudover kendes ingen samlet udgave af opus 18; overhovedet synes disse værker at have været så godt som ukendte uden for England: i de fyldige omtaler af Bachs liv og værker, som vi finder hos tidens teoretikere og kritikere, nævnes opus 18 næsten aldrig, og end ikke Breitkopfs tematiske kataloger anfører mere end en enkelt af disse symfonier. Selvom trykkeåret for opus 18 ret entydigt kan fastsættes til 1781, er det givet, at flere af symfonierne er skrevet langt tidligere, en enkelt, opus 18,3, muligvis så tidligt som 1770.

I kraft af instrumentationen for dobbeltorkester intager disse tre symfonier en særstilling både i J.C. Bachs og tidens symfonilitteratur. Bortset fra en enkelt "Conversation sinfonie" af englænderen John March kendes ingen samtidige eksempler på denne dobbeltorkesterteknik. Værkerne skal muligvis ses som en videreførelse af barokkens *concerterende* princip, og i denne forbindelse bør det betones, at barokke stilelementer, således som de f.eks. kommer til udtryk gennem Corellis, Vivaldis og Händels værker, holdt sig længere i England end på kontinentet. Endelig skal nævnes den korte, men kraftige, opblomstring, som genren *sinfonia concertante* havde omkring 1770, ikke mindst i Paris, som J.C. Bach havde hyppig forbindelse med; Bach bidrog selv med ca. 15 værker til denne genre.

Ved hjælp af denne dobbeltorkester-teknik opnår Bach således at skabe noget nyt gennem en kombination af velkendte og populære musikalske udtryksmidler; barokkens *concerterende* princip forenes med den nye symfoniske skrivemåde, som Bach mere end nogen anden beherskede.

Instrumentationen i symfonierne for dobbeltorkester er i alle tre tilfælde den samme: strygere, 2 oboer, 2 horn og fagot i orkester I, og strygere og 2 fløjter i orkester II. Differentieringen mellem de to orkestre er ikke af tematisk, men af klanglig art: alt det tematiske materiale indføres enten af *tuttiet* eller af orkester I; på dette punkt adskiller værkerne sig klart fra J.C. Bachs *concertante symfonier*. I formmæssig henseende udviser de tre førstesatser træk både fra concert-formen og fra sonateformen, noget der i almindelighed gælder for den tidlige klassiske symfoni.

Det må fastslås, at disse tre symfonier for dobbeltorkester hverken i henseende til udnyttelsen af de enkelte instrumenter eller i formmæssig henseende adskiller sig væsentligt fra andre af tidens talrige symfonier. På den anden side bevirker selve dobbeltorkesterteknikken samt komponistens udnyttelse af det ham overleverede traditionelle musikalske materiale, at netop disse værker måske pådrager sig lidt mere opmærksomhed end så mange andre værker fra 1770'erne, der ikke lige netop er skrevet af en af de "store".