

Erinn Knyt abstract for 2017 Bach Symposium (April 22, 2017)

### Allusions to Bach in the Early Piano Pieces of Ferruccio Busoni

Although Ferruccio Busoni's ideas about Young Classicality were not fully articulated until the late 1910s, his interest in alluding to the past in his compositions stemmed from childhood, and was tied to his knowledge of the music of J.S. Bach. Since creating piano transcriptions of Bach's organ works in the 1890s and compositions based on Bach's music in the early 1900s, Busoni's name has been inextricably linked to Bach. Busoni's connections to Bach, however, extend even farther back.

Many of his youthful piano works, especially those composed between 1877-1881, when Busoni was a student in Trieste, Vienna, and Graz, display indebtedness to Bach's influence. The importance of Bach's music for Busoni's mature compositions has already been discussed by numerous scholars. However, its influence on Busoni's early compositions has been largely overlooked, apart from scholarship by Larry Sitsky. Through analyses of letters, essays, unpublished student exercise books, and scores, my paper expands upon Sitsky's research by revealing the extent of Busoni's youthful knowledge of Bach's music and of Busoni's appropriation of it in his early piano pieces. In the process, it conveys new knowledge about Busoni's education and youthful compositions. It also enriches knowledge about the spread of Bach's music in late nineteenth-century Italy. In addition, it shows the relevance of musical references to Bach in the latter part of the 19th century for the emergence of musical modernism.