

ORGAN GIANTS

J.S. BACH • MENDELSSOHN • SCHUMANN • BRAHMS • B-A-C-H

William Fox

Sunday 30 May 2021, 4.30 pm

Live-stream only



Complete Organ Works of J. S. Bach (1685 – 1750)

Recital XI

Prelude and Fugue in C minor

BWV 546

As with many of Bach's great 'free works', it is likely that these two movements were written independently. The *alla breve* fugue is most plausibly a product of Bach's youth in the Weimar court. The imposing prelude is more complex and betrays similar structural characteristics to other preludes, such as BWV 544 and BWV 548, suggesting that it was composed during Bach's mature years in Leipzig. A highly dramatic piece in ritornello form, the Prelude is founded on a motif which Bach would later reuse in the opening chorus of his cantata *Wer sich selbst erhöhet* (BWV 47).

Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr'

715

Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr'

717

Fuga super Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr'

716

The text of this chorale is the Lutheran paraphrase of the Gloria in excelsis ('Glory to God in the highest'). BWV 715 demonstrates the style of hymn accompaniment Bach would employ while an organist in Arnstadt; rife with adventurous harmony interspersed with improvisatory flourishes between each line, the piece betrays the young Bach's restless desire to flaunt his flamboyant talents, even in circumstances as austere as eighteenth-century Lutheran Sunday services. BWV 717 is a gentle setting of the chorale: above the gently lilting texture a soprano cantus firmus floats. BWV 716 is a three-part fugue. The piece's subject is built on the first line of the chorale melody, which is given a rendition in its complete form towards the miniature's conclusion.

Prelude and Fugue in D minor

539

The masterfully constructed fugue is an arrangement of the second movement of Bach's *Violin Sonata in G minor* (BWV 1001), thus its composition must date from 1720 onwards. Given its providence, the



arrangement of this fugue for organ has been nicknamed the 'Fiddle' Fugue. Whether transferred to the organ by a pupil or by Bach himself, the piece is an exemplary exercise in nimble contrapuntal writing. The origin of the delicate Prelude is unknown, having surfaced in the nineteenth century. A *manualiter* movement, its serene simplicity contrasts well with the agile intricacy of the fugue.

Notes by Samuel Bristow

William Fox

William Fox has been the Sub-Organist of St Paul's Cathedral, London, since July 2018. He works with the world-famous choir of St Paul's, accompanying and directing the music at services, including services of national significance. He also works as part of the ambitious music outreach programme at the Cathedral and gives recitals throughout the UK and abroad. Since September 2019, William has additionally been a junior fellow at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. William was a chorister at York Minster, before holding organ scholarships at Wells and Hereford Cathedrals. Prior to his appointment at St Paul's, he was organ scholar and an academic scholar at Magdalen College, Oxford, from where he graduated with a first class degree in Music. William became a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists as a teenager, winning the Turpin and Durrant prize. He has appeared on BBC radio, BBC television, and Classic FM, and worked through much of Europe and in the USA. His debut recording, of the organ works of Cecilia McDowall, was released in 2021, gaining a 5 * review in *Choir and Organ*. As a piano accompanist, he is the winner of the 2018 Sir Anthony Lewis Memorial Prize Competition.

Next recital | In-person only

Sunday 6 June at 4.30 pm

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