



# ORGAN GIANTS

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

William Fox

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2021, 4.30 pm

 **St PAUL'S**  
CATHEDRAL

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

*Recital XVI*

### **Tocatta in F**

BWV 540i

One of Bach's most energetic 'free works', the *Tocatta in F* is thought to have been composed around 1713 during the composer's time as a court musician in Weimar. This time was a particularly happy period for Bach's organ writing; according to an obituary the positive response to his work there "fired him with the desire to try every possible artistry in his treatment of the organ". Few works illustrate this remark better than BWV 540i. Following the arresting opening of free-flowing semiquavers, a display of pedal virtuosity takes off. In the substantial sections that follow, the initial material is developed extensively. What makes this piece a landmark in Bach's organ writing? Peter Williams sees the piece's memorability and originality as lying in its combination of "overall form, contrapuntal handling, some new harmonic progressions, and dramatic pedal points".

### **Partite sopra: O Gott, du frommer Gott**

767

This early work betrays the influence of Georg Böhm, to whom Bach was apprenticed as a teenager. After an initial statement of the chorale, the verses of the hymn are subtly portrayed in the following eight variations, each with their own style: one characterised by a cello-like bass, another by creeping chromaticism, while the final variation is almost a chorale fantasia in itself. The work's layout on two staves indicates it might have also been intended for domestic keyboard instruments, such as the harpsichord or clavichord.

### **Fugue in F**

540ii

While frequently paired with the *Tocatta*, BWV 540ii emanates from Bach's mature period in Leipzig and was originally published separately. The first subject is coloured by its sinking chromaticism, while the second subject is characterised by graceful quavers. The culmination of the piece is an ingenious mержence of both themes, in

which the opening descending motif is presented in an emphatic pedal entry, concluding this contrapuntal feat with buoyant certitude.

*Notes by Samuel Bristow*

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## William Fox

William Fox is currently the Acting Organist and Assistant Director of Music at St Paul's Cathedral, having been Sub-Organist 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 5 \* reviews in *Choir and Organ* and *The Organ*. As a piano accompanist, he is the winner of the 2018 Sir Anthony Lewis Memorial Prize Competition.

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## Next recital

**Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> September at 4.30 pm**

David Price

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