



ORGAN GIANTS

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

William Fox

Sunday 18th July 2021, 4.30 pm

 **St PAUL'S**
CATHEDRAL

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

Recital XIII: the Ten Commandments

Prelude and Fugue in B minor

BWV 544

This highly dramatic free-work was most likely written in 1727, while Bach lived in Leipzig. Scholars have suggested that it was performed by the composer at the funeral of Christiane Eberhardine der Starke, Electress of Saxony and Queen of Poland. In an intricate texture, the florid semiquaver figurations are interrupted by violent pedal octave leaps, culminating in a paraphrase of Bach's *St John Passion* aria *Es ist vollbracht*. The shape of the fugue's subject displays a strong resemblance to the Easter hymn *Christ lag in Todesbanden*, perhaps a reminder to the funeral congregants of their belief in life after death.

Dies sind die heil'gen zeh'n Gebot

635

The chorale for this *Orgelbüchlein* prelude is the Lutheran summary of the Ten Commandments. While the piece's melody is presented as a soprano cantus firmus, the lower accompanying voices are founded on a motif derived from the hymn's first phrase.

Dies sind die heil'gen zeh'n Gebot

678

Fughetta super: Dies sind die heil'gen zeh'n Gebot 679

Both of these settings emanate from *Clavier-Übung III*, a large-scale organ mass compiled by Bach during his time as Kapellmeister in Leipzig. BWV 678 appears to be inspired by the opening chorus from Bach's cantata *Du sollt Gott, deinen Herren, lieben* BWV 77. The chorale is presented as a rigid canon to symbolize law and order, possibly even representing the new law of Christ following that of Moses; this is juxtaposed most effectively by a free-roaming semiquaver line which could signify the unruly chaos of humanity. BWV 679 is a sprightly gigue with the subject repeated ten times (the number of commandments) throughout; its cheerful nature perhaps a response to the teaching that the commandments should be followed joyfully.

Though scholars have debated whether the themes for this work are by the Venetian composer Giovanni Legrenzi, they are most likely embellished versions of motifs found in his *Trio Sonata in G minor*, Op. 2/1. Bach's double fugue was irrefutably composed before 1708, demonstrating Bach's already growing knowledge of music outside of Germany. A simple exposition is followed by a second, more elaborate theme; these two subjects are then combined in a pulsating third fugue, before an exhilarating coda concludes the work.

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 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.

Next recital

Sunday 25th July at 4.30 pm

James Norrey (London)

Members of the audience are kindly requested to switch off all electronic devices, and are reminded that photography and recording are not permitted.

The musical heritage of St Paul's has come under severe pressure as a result of COVID-19. There will be a collection as you leave the Cathedral today. We recommend a donation of £5, and thank you in advance for your contribution.

If you are watching online, please visit the following link and include 'Sunday Organ Recitals' in the comment box:

<https://www.stpauls.co.uk/support/st-pauls/donate-to-us>