

ORGAN GIANTS

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

William Fox

Sunday 31st January 2021, 4.30 pm

Live-stream only



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

Recital III

Prelude and Fugue in G

BWV 541

was initially conceived in Italian concerto form in 1712, and was subsequently revised by the mature Bach in Leipzig. From its soaring opening flourish, the energetic prelude sparkles with rhetorical gestures. The fugue subject is strikingly reminiscent of the opening chorus from Bach's cantata *Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis* (BWV 21). Though more serious than the Prelude in its contrapuntal and harmonic complexity, the fugue still glows with exuberance.

Fughetta: Herr Christ, der ein'ge Gottes-Sohn 698

is a contrapuntal miniature on this Lutheran hymn, for the manuals only. The joyous chorale is commonly associated with both Advent and Epiphany.

O Herre Gott, dein Gottlich's Wort

757

The text of this chorale tells of God's word being obscured in darkness until it was brought to light by the arrival of Christ. Bach offers a setting which begins with two simple vocal lines, soon becoming sprightly interplaying figures. Under these figures the chorale is played in the pedals.

Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele

654

emanates from the 'Great Eighteen' Leipzig chorales, although like many of those chorales, the piece was reworked from earlier drafts. Robert Schumann wrote that the work is 'as priceless, deep and full of soul as any piece of music that ever sprang from a true artist's imagination'. The chorale is presented as an embellished soprano solo, above two elegant accompanying voices which interweave throughout the piece, supported by a bass line.

Fughetta: Lob sei dem allmächtigen Gott

704

is an intricate miniature, treating the first phrase of the ancient chorale melody as a fugal subject.



Von Gott will ich nicht lassen

658

The text of this chorale rejoices in receiving God's support, though Bach's response is rather an introverted response to an optimistic text. In an extraordinary ending, possibly symbolising the text "may we after our death be buried deep in the earth, if we are asleep, God will wake us", a new bell-motif is introduced, perhaps imitating the German funeral bell, or a ticking clock.

Canzona in D minor

588

is a work founded in the *stile antico* – drawing inspiration from Bach's forebears. The title suggests the influence of Froberger and Buxtehude, but it can also trace its lineage back to the compositions of Italian master Girolamo Frescobaldi, a collection of whose work Bach owned and deeply admired.

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. As a piano accompanist, he is the winner of the 2018 Sir Anthony Lewis Memorial Prize Competition.

Next recital | Live-stream only

Sunday 7th February at 4.30 pm

Simon Johnson | B-A-C-H Recital I: Codes, Ciphers and Cryptograms

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