

ORGAN GIANTS

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William Fox

Sunday 3rd July 2022, 4.30 pm

 St PAUL'S
CATHEDRAL

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

Recital 25: Works for Trinitytide

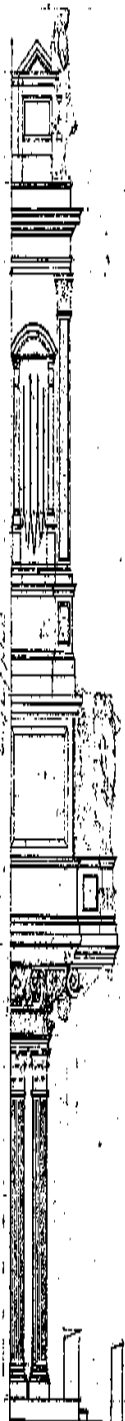
Prelude in E flat

BWV 552i

Clavier-Übung III, the volume from which the entirety of this recital is drawn, was written and published during Bach's Leipzig period as a German Organ Mass, setting chorales of the Lutheran liturgy for the organ. Bookending the entire *Clavier-Übung III* are the superb Prelude and Fugue, intended as pre- and post-service music respectively. Both the Prelude and the Fugue are dominated by the number three, most likely symbolising the Holy Trinity – even their key signature of E flat major has three flats. Opening with a French Overture topic, pomp and exuberance are effused by the genre's signature dotted rhythm. The piece also possesses traits of a typical ritornello form as seen in Vivaldi's concerti, with the French overture material returning as the Prelude progresses. The second part is playful in character with Italianate gestures, while the third part is a characteristically solid German fugal section. Scholars have argued that the combination of these three different themes, presented in three identifiably contrasting styles, are a representation of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Kyrie, Gott Vater in Ewigkeit	669
Kyrie, Gott Vater in Ewigkeit	672
Christe, aller Welt Trost	670
Christe, aller Welt Trost	673
Kyrie, Gott heiliger Geist	671
Kyrie, Gott heiliger Geist	674

Following the Prelude, a series of settings based upon Luther's chorale paraphrase of the Kyrie continue the volume. The *pedaliter* Kyrie settings (BWV 669 – 671) all incorporate the cantus firmus within an imitative *stile antico* texture, betraying the influence of Girolamo Frescobaldi's *Fiori Musicali*. The grandeur of BWV 671 culminates with an astonishing harmonic progression unlike any other in Bach's oeuvre. The *manualiter* Kyrie settings (BWV 672 – 674) are four-part fugal works, their motivic material all derived from the chorale melodies. Perhaps in-keeping with Bach's symbolism of the Holy Trinity, the time signatures of these movements are based around the number three: 3/4, 6/8 and 9/8 respectively. Despite the relative brevity of



these movements they are finely-crafted works of varied character, each demonstrating extraordinary subtlety in both mood and texture.

Fugue in E flat

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Acting as the finale of *Clavier-Übung III*, the famous first subject of this triple fugue earns the work's 'St Anne' nickname in English musical circles due to its likeness to the hymn tune by William Croft (most often associated with 'O God, our help in ages past'). This grave, stately and assured exposition gives way to a four-part *manu liter* fugal section, and alongside the new material of energetic quavers, the first subject is ingeniously interwoven into this texture. The final segment acts as an extended coda. After the initial presentation of the vigorous third fugue subject, all three themes are combined in an epic culmination to this monumental work.

Notes by Samuel Bristow

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. In June 2022, he played for the National Service of Thanksgiving for the Platinum Jubilee of HM The Queen, broadcast around the world. 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 10th July at 4.30 pm

Benjamin Collyer

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