



ORGAN GIANTS

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

William Fox

Sunday 18th September 2022, 4.30 pm

 **St PAUL'S**
CATHEDRAL

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

Recital 26: music during the period of mourning following the death of Queen Elizabeth II

Fantasia and Fugue in C minor

BWV 537

Most likely composed in 1720, this free work was nearly lost forever after the death of Bach's pupil Johann Ludwig Krebs in 1780, as a series of copies in the latter's possession was almost thrown away as scrap paper. Such was the piece's subsequent reception that Edward Elgar arranged it for full orchestra. The mournful nature of the Fantasia is announced from the opening melodic theme, an expressive minor sixth interval over a pedal point. Intricate contrapuntal lines bedecked with sighing motifs interweave lugubriously. The fugue is defined by its jagged and angular subject whose rhythm ensures an unwavering energetic fervour.

Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier

730

is a delicate four-part harmonisation of the Whitsun chorale which now resides in English hymnals as "Dearest Jesu, we are here".

Sonata III in D minor

527

The Trio Sonatas were conceived in Leipzig between 1727 – 1730 – when Bach was in his full compositional maturity – and were intended as a series of demanding technical exercises for his son, Wilhelm Friedemann, The D minor sonata, in a key often viewed as sombre by eighteenth-century theorists, is endowed with great emotional depth. The opening *Andante* is an expressive duet above a bass, the two melodic lines playfully mingling above. The second movement is a beautifully lyrical *Adagio e dolce*, a movement later reworked into Bach's celebrated Triple Concerto BWV 1044. The final *Vivace* is a sprightly fugal rondo, its energy surged by the vibrant triplet figuration found in the subject – a motif fully exploited as the piece unfolds.

Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier

731

This serene miniature, like BWV 730, was most likely composed before 1708 in Arnstadt. In contrast to the previous setting, the chorale is heavily embellished with exquisite figures, accompanied by three lower parts.

Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott

720

Perhaps surprisingly, this piece is Bach's only organ setting of Luther's iconic Reformation hymn. The work's earliest appearance is in the *Plauener Orgelbuch*

of 1708, meaning it is undisputedly a work from Bach's youth. Its colourful and unusual registration markings link the piece with Bach's time in Mühlhausen, as the newly restored organ there had the same stops which he specified in the manuscript. The prelude's distinctive character, however, suggests an earlier period, during which the young Bach was frequently reprimanded by the church authorities in Arnstadt for the over-extroverted nature of his improvised chorale preludes.

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 2018. He works with the world-famous choir of St Paul's, accompanying and directing the music at services, including services of national significance. In June, William played the organ at the National Service of Thanksgiving for the Platinum Jubilee of HM Queen Elizabeth II, and at the Service of Prayer and Reflection the day following her death, broadcast to millions around the world. William began his musical education as 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 a prizewinning 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.

William's 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 continuo and orchestral organist William has recently appeared with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the City of London Sinfonia, Gabrieli Consort and Players, the Cardinal's Musick, and the London Youth Choirs. Since 2019, William has additionally been a Junior Fellow at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, where he also studies. As a piano accompanist, he is the winner of the 2018 Sir Anthony Lewis Memorial Prize Competition.

Next recital

Sunday 2nd October at 4.30 pm

William Fox | Organ Giants | Complete Bach Recital 27

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