

ORGAN GIANTS

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

William Fox

Sunday 23rd October 2022, 4.30 pm

 **St PAUL'S**
CATHEDRAL

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

Recital XXVIII

Fantasia in C

570

If the work is by Bach at all, this Fantasia is most likely an early essay dating from the composer's time in Arnstadt. The piece is in four parts, much like French *plein jeu* movements, and was perhaps an exercise in encouraging a facility in changing finger on the same note and maintaining legato line.

Alle Menschen müssen sterben

643

Ach wie wichtig, ach wie flüchtig

644

An *Orgelbüchlein* prelude, BWV 643 centres on the funeral hymn *Alle Menschen müssen sterben*, a text citing the ecstasy of eternal life after death. A common rhythmic figure pervades the work throughout, creatively employed and therefore avoiding any hint of monotony. The text of *Ach wie wichtig* is based on the 'Vanity of vanities' verse found in Ecclesiastes, the brevity of this setting potentially a humorous reflection of the hymn's opening line 'Oh how fleeting, oh how insubstantial'.

Sonata VI in G

530

While a number of movements from the trio sonatas were reworked from earlier pieces, Sonata VI is a fresh essay by Bach specifically for inclusion in the set. Intended as technical exercises for his eldest son, the Sonatas evidently served their purpose as Wilhelm Friedemann became a prestigious virtuoso organist based in Dresden. BWV 530's opening *Vivace* is a sprightly movement – almost a Brandenburg Concerto movement for the organ in its alternation between tutti and solo textures. The poignant *Lento* is in binary form and is characterised by its poetic lyricism. The impish, sparkling *Allegro* is founded on a jaunty rhythmic motif and is perhaps Bach experimenting with the new *galant* style which was emerging at the time of the work's composition.

Heut triumphieret Gottes Sohn

630

Ach Gott und Herr

714

Es ist das Heil uns kommen her

638

The setting of the triumphal Ascensiontide chorale *Heut triumphieret Gottes Sohn* is founded on a rising motif which appears under the *cantus firmus* at the outset. BWV 714 is distinguished by a canon between treble and tenor voices,



stating the chorale melody, and giving rise to other thematic material. *Es ist das Heil uns kommen her* celebrates the salvation granted to humanity by the grace of God, with a texture strictly differentiated: the melody in crotchets, the middle parts in semiquavers, and quavers in the pedals.

***Fugue on a theme of Corelli in B minor* 579**

This refined fugue is a brilliant example of Bach's distilling German and Italian compositional styles. Both the subject and countersubject are derived from Corelli's *Sonate da Chiesa* Op. 3, No 4; while Corelli's original movement is a brief *Vivace*, Bach's reworking results in a substantial contrapuntal exercise with a rather different *affect*.

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 6th November, 4.30 pm

Laura Schlappa

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.