



signum
CLASSICS

J.S. BACH

1714 Silbermann Organ
of Freiberg Cathedral

David Goode

J.S. BACH

1714 GOTTFRIED SILBERMANN ORGAN
OF FREIBERG CATHEDRAL

Toccat, Adagio and Fugue in C major, BWV 564

- | | | |
|---|--------|--------|
| 1 | Toccat | [6.10] |
| 2 | Adagio | [4.07] |
| 3 | Fugue | [4.28] |

Concerto in A minor (after Antonio Vivaldi), BWV 593

- | | | |
|---|--------------|--------|
| 4 | I. Allegro | [3.59] |
| 5 | II. Adagio | [4.08] |
| 6 | III. Allegro | [4.02] |

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|--------|
| 7 | Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele, BWV 654 | [6.24] |
|---|---------------------------------------|--------|

Prelude and Fugue in B minor, BWV 544

- | | | |
|---|---------|--------|
| 8 | Prelude | [6.57] |
| 9 | Fugue | [6.42] |

- | | | |
|----|--|--------|
| 10 | Vater unser in Himmelreich, BWV 682
(from <i>Clavierübung III</i>) | [6.46] |
|----|--|--------|

Prelude and Fugue in G major, BWV 541

- | | | |
|----|------------------|--------|
| 11 | Prelude (Vivace) | [3.08] |
| 12 | Fugue | [4.51] |

- | | | |
|----|---|--------|
| 13 | O Mensch, beweine dein' Sünde groß, BWV 622
(from <i>Orgelbüchlein</i>) | [5.31] |
|----|---|--------|

Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor, BWV 582

- | | | |
|----|-------------|--------|
| 14 | Passacaglia | [7.24] |
| 15 | Fugue | [5.46] |

Total timings: [80.26]

DAVID GOODE ORGAN

THE ORGAN SHALL SOUND

J.S. Bach wrote more music for the organ than for any other single instrument – the BWV catalogue numbers stretch into the hundreds. Its variety and scope at times defy belief, its complexities confound the most experienced scholars and its beauty is never less than astounding. So why is such a major strand of western classical music so relatively unknown?

The answer lies mostly in the sound of the organ, not helped along by bad recitals in freezing churches... And yet, as this disc shows, the organ can be as subtle as a solo violin, as fearsome as an orchestra, and its music spans the history of western classical music. There's a lot to discover. This recording flies the flag for Bach's organ works, showcasing eight of his finest, performed on the greatest surviving 18th-century German organ.

Bach wrote for the organ all his life, steadily perfecting the art of the fugue and the chorale prelude in the process (his last work was the BWV 668 chorale prelude, 'Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein'). As a renowned performer and improviser, Bach stretched the capabilities of instrument and player to their limits, providing

a body of work that organists today revere and perform more than any other.

It's this spirit of improvisation and virtuosity that the disc's opening work, the three-part **Toccatà, Adagio and Fugue, BWV 564** has in abundance, a work you may know from Liszt's bombastic arrangement for piano. There's every chance this early piece was written to test-drive a new organ, probably the one at his former church in Mühlhausen in 1709. Its opening manual flourishes, demanding pedal solo and flashy, cascading main section would have put the organ's keyboard and pedalboard action, and the contrast between the different manuals, through their paces. The lyrical Adagio would have highlighted the instrument's flute tones or, in the case of this recording, the sweet, subtle mutation stops, and the nippy fugue the clarity of the whole organ. The carefree, tossed-away ending is typical of Bach's unexpected touches.

If the stylistic jump of this Toccata's episodic opening movement to that of the B minor Prelude and Fugue, BWV 544 seems huge, then it is – and is largely due to the influence that Vivaldi had on him. Bach arranged 16 of his concertos for the clavier and three for the organ – the three-movement **A minor Concerto**

is his most celebrated. It has characteristics that can be spotted in later Bach organ works: a relentless forward motion, a sense of order and proportion, and a unity that takes him away from his North German predecessors whom he had worshipped as a young man.

And so the **Prelude and Fugue in B minor, BWV 544**, although distinctly 'Bach', has that Italian weight and roundedness, with the Prelude incorporating Italianate harmonic sequences. It's one of Bach's most mature, but most melancholic works, probably performed at the funeral of the Electress of Saxony in 1727. The fugue (track 9) is remarkable, with its meandering lines and sense of inevitability, driving on to the final cadence with unstoppable force. Listen out for the thunderous pedal reeds that rise and rise inexorably from 5.35, and hear the music pull gently and deliciously against the organ's mean-tone tuning.

Perhaps even more Italian, however, is the **Prelude and Fugue in G major, BWV 541**, a riot of skittish pedal and manual work, knitted together with some of Bach's most joyful harmonies and playful counterpoint. Bach marks 'Vivace' at the start of the Prelude – one of a very few tempo markings in any of his works; it

may be that, above his other organ pieces, the G major Prelude required all the swagger a player could throw at it. The fugue's subject is a major version of the opening chorus of Cantata 21 and has a clockwork feel to it, thanks to the repeated quavers of the subject and the whirlwind semiquavers that pervade the piece.

Away from concertos, and preludes and fugues, Bach wrote more than 200 chorale preludes based on Lutheran chorales, incorporating their melodies either in the soprano, within the texture itself or setting them as a bass line. They were written for a variety of uses: as an introduction to congregational chorales, as an interesting interlude between verses or to be played during communion. Often overlooked, however, is the fact that they may have been simply written as concert pieces – one of the few surviving accounts of Bach performing in public describes him improvising on *An Wasserflüssen Babylon* for over half an hour – a giant chorale prelude!

For this disc, we've selected the best from three of the major collections starting with '**Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele**' from The Eighteen, a book of chorale preludes collated in Leipzig in the 1740s. Among Bach's most heartfelt chorales,

he places the elaborately ornamented melody in the soprano.

'**Vater unser im Himmelreich**' is taken from *Clavierübung III*, 'consisting of various preludes on the catechism and other hymns, for the organ', as the original title page read – it was the first collection of Bach's organ works to be published. It's the longest of all Bach's chorale preludes and rhythmically it's astounding, with lilting, backwards-dotted (Lombardic) figuration countered by triplet semiquavers and accompanied by a walking quaver bass. In effect, it's a trio sonata and a hefty challenge for the player. For the listener, it's an exquisite experience.

The final chorale prelude on this recording is from the incomplete *Orgelbüchlein*, containing 46 short chorale preludes (Bach had intended to compose 164, charting the Lutheran year). Each miniature masterpiece presents the melody, unadorned, in the soprano except three, including '**O Mensch, bewein' dein' Sünde groß**' where the melody appears in the soprano, but highly ornamented. The startling final three bars come as something of a surprise with the sudden use of a G-flat major chord – a reminder, maybe, of Christ's physical pain on the cross.

The disc ends with Bach's grandest statement for the organ – the **Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor, BWV 582**, composed astonishingly early sometime between 1706 and 1713 and heavily influenced by Buxtehude's brilliant chaconnes – dig out the one in C minor, BuxWV 159, and you'll notice quite a few similarities. Bach's simple eight-bar bass theme, stated at the beginning in the pedals, provides the framework for a phenomenally diverse array of 20 variations. The bass melody is eventually passed to the manuals (listen, especially, to track [14], 5.11 – 5.34), before returning to the feet beneath a hypnotic, dizzying display of semiquavers. The Passacaglia fugue sets itself apart from all other Bach organ fugues in that the subject (the Passacaglia theme) is joined immediately by a countersubject notated in quavers. From then on, along with a second countersubject in semiquavers, Bach creates a wealth of contrapuntal textures from various permutations of his three subjects – until the final 22 bars which are among the most exciting and climactic in all Bach. All in all, the Passacaglia is a work that is equalled in scale and vision only by Bach's other two works in this genre: the Chaconne for solo violin from the second Partita, and the *Goldberg Variations* for harpsichord.

A SUITABLE INSTRUMENT

In 2008, we took organist David Briggs to Toulouse to record organ symphonies by the French composers Widor and Vierne on one of the most complete and untouched French Romantic instruments. Although we went for the Cavail-lé-Coll at St Sernin in Toulouse, dozens of instruments in French cathedrals and churches would have equally been up to the task.

Recording J.S. Bach's organ music on an authentic 18th-century instrument proved to be a different matter. We wanted to find the kind of organ that the composer would have played, one untouched by progress, and one whose pitch and tuning had been maintained. Sourcing one wasn't easy. Aside from choosing the type of organ suitable for performing Bach (he travelled throughout Germany and wrote his music for different types), most surviving 18th-century German organs have either been reconstructed following damage – often at the hands of World War II incendiary bombs – or been 'modernised' to suit today's congregations: the tuning altered, pipes replaced or added, modern pedal boards installed, the pitch shifted up, and so on.

But I knew of one organ in Freiberg Cathedral, about an hour on the train from Dresden – the great organ built between 1711 and 1714 by Gottfried Silbermann. He is recognised as one of the greatest organ builders of the last 400 years and Freiberg Cathedral's 41-stop, three-manual instrument was his crowning masterpiece. Thrillingly, it has survived intact, maintained over the years by the builder's apprentices, but it has lain virtually untouched since a modification in 1738, within Bach's lifetime. Even the bellows can be pumped manually. So this is a rare chance to hear the finest surviving German Baroque organ and Bach's organ music as it would have sounded in the early 18th century.

Aside from its historical importance, why plump for this organ? Many see Silbermann's instruments as the ideal 'Bach organ' – as Bach's music moved away from the stop-start, episodic North German Toccata, as composed by the likes of Buxtehude and Bruhns, so it needed an instrument that was no longer divided into clear sections. Silbermann placed his organs in one single case, which lent itself much more to Bach's unified works, particularly his late Preludes and Fugues. In terms of sound, Silbermann brought a brightness and richness

that has influenced organ building to this day. And, as you'll hear, the reeds and corner stops are strong and weighty, and the metal pipework, with its high tin content, is bright. You may also notice the organ's unusually high pitch (a=476Hz), and the mean-tone tuning has been preserved, albeit tweaked a bit.

There are historical associations with this organ too. Bach wasn't blessed with fine instruments in his places of work, but he was a renowned organist, giving concerts all over Germany, as well as an organ inspector, testing and inaugurating new instruments. He is known to have played the Silbermanns in Dresden, including the organs at the Sophienkirche and the Frauenkirche (did he venture to Freiberg?), and Bach and Silbermann met on some occasions, one of which was to inspect a Naumburg organ built by a pupil of the latter.

For our organist David Goode, recording producer John West, engineer Mike Hatch and myself, this was the recording opportunity of a lifetime. We hope you find this music, played on such a miraculous instrument, as beautiful and moving as we did during our three days in Freiberg.

© Oliver Condy

DAVID GOODE

David Goode has been Organist and Head of Keyboard at Eton College since 2005. He was a music scholar at Eton and organ scholar at King's College, Cambridge from 1991-4, studying organ with David Sanger and Jacques van Oortmerssen. From 1996-2001 he was Sub-Organist at Christ Church, Oxford; following prizes at the 1997 St. Alban's Competition, and the 1998 Calgary Competition, he concentrated on a freelance career between 2001 and 2003. In 2003 he moved for 2 years to Los Angeles as Organist-in-Residence at First Congregational Church, home to the world's largest church organ.

He made his Royal Festival Hall debut in 2002, and played Bach's *Art of Fugue* in the Queen Elizabeth Hall in 2009. Concerts in 2011 included appearances at the BBC Proms (where he has featured often since 1999), the Vienna Konzerthaus and Rice University, Texas. He has an established duo partnership with the trumpeter Alison Balsom, with recent concerts including the Moscow Arts, Three Choirs, and Passau Festivals. His CD releases since 1994 (from Cambridge, Oxford, Los Angeles and Eton) have received excellent reviews; he has also forged a strong relationship on BBC Radio 3 with



the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and the BBC Singers. Volume 1 of his series of the Complete Organ Music of Max Reger was widely praised; he has also played numerous contemporary works, including Francis Pott's *Christus* (a performance described by The Times as 'a stupendous achievement').



ORGAN SPECIFICATION

Three-manual Gottfried Silbermann organ of Freiberg Cathedral, Germany. Built between 1711 and 1714. Slightly modified in 1738.

Hauptwerk (manual I)

Bordun 16'
Principal 8'
Rohrflöt 8'
Viola di Gamba 8'
Octava 4'
Quinta 3'
Superoctav 2'
Tertia (1 3/5')
Cornet V
Mixtur IV
Zimbeln III
Trompet 8'
Clarin 4'

Pedal

Untersatz 32'
Principalbass 16'
Subbass 16'
Octavbass 8'
Octavbass 4'
Pedalmixtur VI
Psaunenbass 16'
Trompetenbass 8'
Clarinbass 4'

Oberwerk (manual III)

Quintadehn 16'
Principal 8'
Gedackt 8'
Quintadehn 8'
Octava 4'
Spitzflöt 4'
Superoctav 2'
Flaschflöt 1'
Mixtur III
Zimbeln II
Echo V
Krumhorn 8'
Vox humana 8'

Brustwerk (manual I)

Gedackt 8'
Principal 4'
Rohrflöt 4'
Nassat 3'
Octava 2'
Tertia 1 3/5'
Quinta 1 1/2'
Sufflöt 1'
Mixtur III

Couplers:

Oberwerk/Hauptwerk
Brustwerk/Hauptwerk

Tremulant (manuals I, II & III)
Schwebung (III)

Pitch: a'=476.3 Hz
Tuning: modified mean-tone

Recorded on the 1714 Gottfried Silbermann organ of Freiberg Cathedral, Germany, 4-6 July 2010

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Recording Engineer - Mike Hatch
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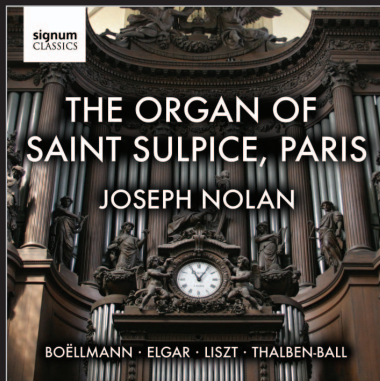
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