



ORGAN GIANTS

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

William Fox

Sunday 30th January 2022, 4.30 pm

 **St PAUL'S**
CATHEDRAL

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

Recital XX: 'Vater unser', 'Our Father': the Lord's Prayer

Tocatta and Fugue in C

BWV 566a

is an exceptional example of a praeludium from the North German School, a form mastered by Bach's idol, Dietrich Buxtehude. Structurally, Bach follows Buxtehude's example but on a considerably grander scale. The improvisatory introduction gives way to a strict fugal section, then a rhetorical flourish, followed by a confident second fugue and a sparkling coda.

Vater unser im Himmelreich

636

The text of this hymn is the Lutheran summary and expansion of the Lord's Prayer; its importance to the Lutheran faith is evident through how many settings Bach composed over the course of his life. This four-part harmonisation emanates from the *Orgelbüchlein*.

Vater unser im Himmelreich

762

In this possibly early work, the chorale is treated as a cantus firmus with an imitative accompaniment, perhaps inspired by the chorale preludes of Dietrich Buxtehude. Though its authenticity is doubtful, its compositional merit is perhaps affirmed by Zoltán Kodály choosing to arrange the work for cello and piano.

Vater unser im Himmelreich

737

is a piece founded in the *stile antico*, embodying the polyphonic choral motets of sixteenth-century composers such as Heinrich Schütz.

Vater unser im Himmelreich

682

Vater unser im Himmelreich

683

Emanating from the *Clavier-Übung III*, these settings of the Lord's Prayer are the spiritual heart of the volume, as they act as the chorale prelude for communion.

In BWV 682, Bach writes a piece of extraordinary ingenuity and creativity. Within a trio texture, the chorale melody is presented as a canon between the hands, incorporating rhythmic motifs and remarkable chromaticism.

In contrast to this elaborate setting, BWV 683 presents one of stark simplicity; the chorale is stated plainly at the top of the texture and is accompanied by a gentle sequence of flowing semiquavers.

Unique in Bach's oeuvre, this work evokes the polyphonic sonorities of Palestrina, with its rich abundance of suspensions and imitative entries. The work was most likely written during Bach's Leipzig years, during which time he researched Latin based choral works; a study which would culminate in the *Mass in B minor* BWV 232. While incorporating all the subtle nuances traditionally found in the 'alla breve' style, the monumental organs at Bach's disposal possibly inspired this piece's unwavering grandeur.

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. 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 6th February at 4.30 pm

Alexander Knight

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.

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