



# ORGAN GIANTS

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

William Fox

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2022, 4.30 pm

 **St PAUL'S**  
CATHEDRAL

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

*Recital XXI*

### **Prelude and Fugue in C minor**

BWV 549

is potentially one of Bach's earliest ventures into this genre, emanating from his first years in Arnstadt. The structure of the Prelude foreshadows the composer's later free works, such as the *Toccatà, Adagio and Fugue in C* (BWV 564). An opening pedal solo, encompassing the entire range of the pedalboard settles into confident contrapuntal material. The Fugue continues the Prelude's austere temperament; building in intensity and rhythmic complexity before a brilliant virtuosic spectacle to conclude the work.

### **Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr'**

675

### **Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr'**

676

### **Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr'**

677

These settings act as the Gloria section in Bach's monumental organ Mass, published as *Clavier-Übung III*. As a triptych these settings rise in a sequence of major keys from F to G to A, perhaps echoing the same rising nature of the chorale's opening phrase. The swirling semiquaver triplets in BWV 675, shared as a duet between highest and lowest voices, surround a cantus firmus rendition of the chorale in the middle of the texture. BWV 676 is a trio movement, the motivic material lifted from the chorale's opening phrase and developed with uplifting lyricism. A cantus firmus of the chorale is presented here in myriad forms, subtly passed around the voices as the work progresses. BWV 677 is a skilfully-constructed fughetta of remarkable complexity for a piece of such brevity; a sliver of the chorale melody provides the basis for two themes which Bach treats separately then ingeniously interweaves in this bright, sparkling setting.

### **Vor deinen Thron tret' ich**

668

Bach's first official biographer, Johann Nikolaus Forkel, identified an original fragment of this piece as a deathbed dictation, transcribed by Bach's son-in-law and copyist Johann Christoph Altnikol. This completed version was included by Bach's son Carl Philip Emanuel in the first edition of *The Art of Fugue*, published posthumously. The soprano cantus firmus is supported by three slow-moving voices which imitate material derived from the chorale melody.

## Prelude and Fugue in G minor

535

Due to its listing in a collection of organ music compiled by his brother Johann Christoph, the Prelude is believed to be one of Bach's earliest works. Its improvisatory, sectional nature recalls the praeludia of Dietrich Buxtehude, whom Bach famously met at around the same time as this piece's composition. Altogether more tightly-constructed than the Prelude, the Fugue appears the work of a more settled composer; the flourishes incorporated throughout generate the electrifying coda.

Notes by Samuel Bristow

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## 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.

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## Next recital

**Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> February at 4.30 pm**

Callum Alger

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