

# ORGAN GIANTS

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

William Fox

Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2021, 4.30 pm

 St PAUL'S  
CATHEDRAL

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

*Recital XVII*

### **Tocatta and Fugue in D minor**

BWV 565

From its iconic opening rhetorical gestures and all that follows, the Tocatta could well be an illustration of Bach the master improviser. The work supposedly dates from c. 1704 during Bach's youth in Arnstadt, where he held an organist's post that he reputedly obtained following a single improvisation for the church authorities. The Fugue is a wide-ranging survey of the keyboard-writing styles of the composer's day, demonstrating particularly the influence of Pachelbel and the north German organ school. Peter Williams has questioned the authenticity of the entire piece, based on features he considers unusual, and elaborates the idea that the piece may have originated as a work for solo violin, given stylistic similarities with the Italian violin school.

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

662

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

664

This chorale text is a paraphrase of the Gloria. BWV 662, an intensely lyrical prelude, is an example of Bach as the mature composer working in Leipzig, revisiting and thoroughly revising a draft from his younger years in Weimar. Bach marked this tranquil prelude *Adagio*, an instruction rarely found in his oeuvre, perhaps reflecting the text of the chorale 'to us no harm shall now come nigh, the strife at last is ended'. BWV 664 is a vibrant trio which incorporates the melodic material of the chorale throughout. The fluttering of the upper voices, set unusually high in the register, could perhaps be illustrating the angels singing 'Glory to God in the highest'. At the work's conclusion, Bach inscribed S.D.G. in the manuscript: 'Soli Deo Gloria' (To the Glory of God alone).

### **Christ, der du bist der helle Tag**

766

Bach's chorale partitas most likely date from his student days and demonstrate that, in spite of his claims in later life that he had no



teacher, he was greatly indebted to Georg Böhm – to whom Bach was an apprentice as a teenager. Böhm was himself a master of the chorale partita – a chorale harmonisation followed by imaginative variations thereupon. The chorale text of BWV 766 is based on the hymn *Te lucis ante terminum*, a text for the ending of the day, praying for God's protection from the terrors of night. Bach provides a response to these words which is largely intimate, introverted and contemplative.

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 7<sup>th</sup> November at 4.30 pm**

Martyn Noble

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