JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH
The Complete Organ Works, Vol. 13
DAVID GOODE
Trinity College Chapel, Cambridge
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BACH, BEAUTY AND BELIEF
THE ORGAN WORKS OF J.S. BACH

Introduction – Bach and the Organ
The organ loomed large from early on in Bach’s life. The foundations of his multifaceted career as a professional musician were clearly laid in the careful cultivation of Bach’s prodigious talent as an organist whilst he was still a child. Johann Sebastian Bach was born in Eisenach in 1685, and after the death of his father – the director of municipal music in the town – at the age of ten moved to Ohrdruf, where he was taken in by his eldest brother, Johann Christoph. Christoph was the organist at St Michael’s Ohrdruf and had been taught by Pachelbel.1 During his years at Ohrdruf, the young Sebastian was a choral scholar and likely had his first experiences in organ building and maintenance.2 In 1700 he moved to Lüneburg, as a choral scholar at St Michael’s School; this move brought him into the orbit of many organists, including Georg Böhm and Adam Reinken in Hamburg.3 1703 found him examining a new organ at the New Church in Arnstadt, where he was appointed as organist in August of that year, remaining for four years, his first major professional organist post (Wolff 2001 p. 526). Clearly showing remarkable talent as a player from an early age, Bach’s career remained founded upon the organ even as he moved around in a variety of posts after leaving Arnstadt in 1707: as the organist of St Blasius’s in Mühlhausen (1707 – 1708), court organist and chamber musician at Weimar (1708 – 1717), capellmeister at Cöthen (1717 – 1723) and cantor at St Thomas’ Church in Leipzig (1723 – 1750).

‘The Complete Organ Works of Bach’
Given that strong foundation, it is no surprise that organ music flowed from Bach’s pen throughout his life. Yet how do Bach’s organ works cohere? For the monolithic notion of ‘The Complete Organ Works of Bach’ is misleading. The picture is more fluid, even unclear, both as to the veracity of individual works and of their particular chronology. The impression is of a combination of works that have reached us in their present form through an often uncertain process of revision and collection (such as the Six Sonatas, BWV 525 – 530) and those with a more definite origin and/or date, such as Clavierübung III, which was published in 1739. Even a collection with a clear didactic purpose that is apparently easy to date like the Orgelbüchlein, BWV 599 – 644 (its title page is dated to 1722 or 1723)4 can remain opaque in the chronology and detail of its contents: the title page was added later than the chorales it contains (Williams 2003 p. 227). Many of the preludes and fugues do not exist in autograph form, a fact that in most cases does not affect the question of authorship as much as that of the date of composition, although the authorship of some organ works previously assumed to have been by Bach have been called into question, like the Eight Short Preludes and Fugues, BWV 553 – 560. Others are easier by

3 Wolff, Learned Musician, p. 525.
virtue of their singularity either to ascribe authorship to, such as the Passacaglia, BWV 582, or to date, such as the Concerto Transcriptions, BWV 592 – 596, which are from Bach’s Weimar years (Williams 2003 p. 202). However, the fluidity of the corpus is not as interesting – or as significant – as the stylistic and generic variety it exhibits.

Genres, Styles and Influences
Bach’s organ works are characterised, typically for the composer, by a multiplicity of genres and stylistic influences. Broadly they can be categorised into five areas, though inevitably these overlap: chorale-based works (preludes, partitas, variations, trios); the Six Sonatas; preludes/toccatas/fantasias (including the Passacaglia) and fugues (paired together, and single); transcriptions of works by other composers (concertos, trios, etc.); miscellaneous works (Allabreve, Canzona, Pièce D’Orgue, etc.). Williams catalogues the multifarious stylistic influences on Bach’s organ works. Many of these are traceable to other contemporary German organ composers whose compositional style Bach would almost certainly have known. As Williams states, these would have included Pachelbel, Böhm, Buxtehude, Bruhns, Reinken, Kerl and Froberger. Bach’s organ works also frequently betray a French influence, both specifically, such as in the famous example of the Passacaglia, BWV 582, the first half of whose main theme originates in a piece by Raison, and more generically, such as in the C minor Fantasia, BWV 562 with its stylistic debt to French composers such as de Grigny. In addition, an Italian influence is often felt in the manual writing across-the-board from the quasi-string writing in the Six Sonatas to the tripartite Toccata in C, BWV 564 via the Frescobaldian Canzona, BWV 588 and Corellian Allabreve, BWV 589.

Purposes
As the above discussion suggests, it is not surprising that many of the exact original purposes for the organ works remain unknown, though in general terms the following categories of use can be discerned: liturgical (many, if not most, of the chorales and chorale preludes; some of the prelude/toccatas and fugue pairs); didactic (the Six Sonatas; the Orgelbüchlein); stylistic assimilation (the concerto transcriptions; some toccatas and fantasias; Legrenzi and Corelli Fugues). In addition, collections such as Clavierübung III and perhaps the Schübler Chorales had a purpose that transcended their immediate utility: the desire to offer a musical-theological compendium (Clavierübung III), or leave a musical legacy (Schübler Chorales).

A Note on Current Bach Scholarship
Such is the scope of Bach’s organ works. But how have they been covered in the literature? There is a fascinating dialectic evident in current Bach studies more broadly between a hermeneutic taken up with purely musical concerns for Bach’s works, and a broader analytical approach to his music that seeks to contextualize Bach’s contrapuntal, figurative and harmonic

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peculiarities and complexities within a much broader framework involving contemporary theology,\textsuperscript{7} aesthetics,\textsuperscript{8} philosophy,\textsuperscript{9} and science.\textsuperscript{10} Assessing these different approaches to Bach’s music is difficult, as the results are inevitably mixed. On the one hand, there is a need to maintain a degree of musical integrity by allowing the musical features of Bach’s compositions to come first in any attempt to understand them. Thus, some of the least convincing musical-analytical work done from the contextual side arises from an approach to Bach’s music that is too superficial. On the other hand, there is a sense in some of the ‘music-only’ approaches that\textit{ any} recourse to relevant external and contextual questions ought to be dismissed out of hand when clearly such factors occasionally – perhaps often – played a legitimate role in Bach’s compositional process. The ideal, then, seems to be to take an approach to describing Bach’s organ music that both honours the music itself whilst allowing for wider contextual questions to shape one’s thinking as appropriate, perhaps on a piece-by-piece basis. With that in mind, there seem to be two broad extra-musical contexts of particular relevance to the organ music of Bach in which purely musical observations can be worked out. These are\textit{ theology,}\textit{ and aesthetics.}

\textbf{Theological Aesthetics}

Peter Williams highlights a conundrum that needs tackling if one is to think theologically about Bach’s organ music, namely the tension that exists between Bach’s stated theological intention in composition (most famously revealed in the composer’s signature ‘S.D.G.’ – ‘Soli Deo Gloria’ (To God Alone Be Glory) – that has been found on some of Bach’s manuscripts, penned after the final bars) and the apparent self-interestedness of much of Bach’s music.\textsuperscript{11} The key that unlocks this dilemma is the observation made by John Butt,\textsuperscript{12} that for Bach, as for other Lutherans, music was\textit{ intrinsically} of eternal value. We can be more specific and outline two ways in which the inherent theological nature of music, as it was understood, appears to have influenced the music Bach actually wrote.

\textit{i) Music as Theological Metaphor}

A theological idea that was found in the Leipzig circles in which Bach moved in the 1740s was that God’s beauty can be conceived conceptually as a type of\textit{ harmonia}:

\begin{quote}
God is a harmonic being. All harmony originates from his
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{10} David Yearsley,\textit{ Bach and the Meanings of Counterpoint} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
\textsuperscript{11} See Williams,\textit{ Bach Organ Music}, pp. 10-11.
\textsuperscript{12} See John Butt, ‘Bach’s metaphysics of music’ in Butt (ed.),\textit{ The Cambridge Companion to Bach}, p. 53.
wise order and organization... Where there is no conformity, there is also no order, no beauty, and no perfection. For beauty and perfection consists in the conformity of diversity.\textsuperscript{13}

This fundamental idea of God’s beauty as expressed in His unity-in-diversity immediately invites the metaphorical projection of this concept onto His creation: His beauty is expressed though His creation via the same aesthetic of unity-in-diversity. While criticisms have been levelled at this definition of beauty when held as an absolute value, as an explanation of Bach’s contrapuntal practice it is highly suggestive. This desire for art to imitate nature in its perfection motivated Bach’s musical project throughout his career and is particularly evident in his treatment of counterpoint: ‘[c]haracteristic of Bach’s manner of composing is a way of elaborating the musical ideas so as to penetrate the material deeply and exhaustively.’\textsuperscript{14} Bach’s maximization of thematic coherence, harmonic richness, and contrapuntal complexity can be thus understood as having a theological rationale. This rationale perhaps best fits the music with which there is no accompanying text to direct one’s interpretation of the musical figures, and is particularly relevant in grasping the aesthetic behind specifically contrapuntal projects like \textit{The Art of Fugue}.\textsuperscript{15}

\textbf{ii) Music designed to move the Affections towards God}

Ever since the discovery of Bach’s personal Bible commentary, the so-called ‘Calov Bible’, it has often been noted that Bach’s music appears to have been intended as an expression of a specifically, and personally-held, Lutheran faith.\textsuperscript{15} The implications of this in seeking an informed speculation of Bach’s theological views of music are significant. For the indications in Luther’s writings are not only that he saw music as inherently theological on a number of different levels,\textsuperscript{16} but specifically that he saw music as having a role in moving the believer’s affections towards God, and thus an ability to strengthen the believer’s faith in Christ.\textsuperscript{17} Combining this insight with the commonly-observed (though not unchallenged) evidence of the Baroque Affektenlehre (or ‘Doctrine of the Affections’) in Bach’s music, it can be seen how often Bach’s sacred music (chorale-based or liturgically-intended; often both) makes its spiritual utility felt through its projection of a relevant and (sometimes) dominant affekt. This primary affekt is then projected through the musical material, itself often consisting of harmonic and motivic workings-out of a single inventio, or dominant musical figure.\textsuperscript{18} In the organ

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\textsuperscript{13} Georg Vensky, 1742. Like Bach, Vensky was a member of Lorenz Christoph Mizler’s Society for Musical Science. Quoted in Wolff, \textit{Learned Musician}, p. 466.
\textsuperscript{14} Wolff, \textit{Learned Musician}, p. 469.
\textsuperscript{15} See Robin A. Leaver, ‘Music and Lutheranism’ in Butt (ed.), \textit{The Cambridge Compan-

\textsuperscript{16} Robin A. Leaver, \textit{Luther’s Liturgical Music: Principles and Implications} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).
\textsuperscript{17} See Luther’s directions to believers suffering depression: ‘When you are sad, there-

fore, and when melancholy threatens to get the upper hand, say: “Arise! I must play a song unto the Lord on my regal [...]”. Then begin striking the keys and singing in accompaniment, as David and Elisha did, until your sad thoughts vanish.’ Martin Luther, Theodore G. Tappert (ed.), \textit{Letters of Spiritual Counsel} (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006) p. 97.
\textsuperscript{18} Laurence Dreyfus, \textit{Bach and the Patterns of Invention} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).
\end{flushright}
music, this notion is perhaps most useful in approaching the chorale preludes—a genre that covers many of the organ works—where in many cases the background text, where clear, often illuminates both the general affekt of a given prelude, and the specificity of particular harmonies and figurations that have been chosen to illustrate it.

Conclusion – Bach, Beauty and Belief
Although the label of ‘The Complete Organ Works of Bach’ for the corpus is a misnomer, there are still many varied ways in which to view it coherently; theological aesthetics is just one example. Theology and aesthetics combine throughout Bach’s organ music, uniting them as works that project a Christian Lutheran worldview through their specifically musical beauty. In this they serve as exemplars of the theology of another towering eighteenth-century Christian intellect, whose published thought also combined beauty and belief with an emphasis on the affections of the believer: the American pastor Jonathan Edwards, with whom Bach has once been compared.19 Edwards placed the affections-of-the-heart at the centre of his definition of genuine Christian experience, and thus taught that moving them God-ward was the primary aim of any means of grace in the church, whether preaching or music. As examples of Edward’s affection-driven theology in practice, the organ works of Bach clearly cohere in their common ability to promote both belief and beauty, or perhaps more accurately, belief through beauty.


**BWV 534 Prelude and Fugue in F minor**
The Prelude of BWV 534 is striking for its mixture of darkly minor and passionate affects. It is knitted together with a rhetorical suspirans figure, opening the Prelude in the pedal below a single soaring voice in the upper register. This leads into sections of arpeggios in the manuals above a pedal note, with pedal scales adding interest. Overall, the Prelude is a complex structure—the chief musical argument set in a binary form; then, after a dense dissonance and pause, a freer cadential section closes the movement, with gradually-descending manual writing into a five-part close.

The more volatile affect of the Prelude is balanced by a more predictable and ordered Fugue. The simple three-bar subject in the tenor register is marked by three elements—a straightforward ascending scale; a plunging diminished seventh; and a faster descending scale. As the Fugue progresses, more complexity is added, both rhythmically through gentle syncopations and melodically with quaver movement. In the final bars the rhetorical force of the Prelude returns in an arresting solo in the same upper register that opened the Prelude, leading to a satisfying close.

**BWV 588 Canzona in D minor**
The canzona form, such as seen in Frescobaldi’s *Fiori Musicale* (Bach owned a copy), is one that allows for considerable freedom in structure and expression, its sections permitting the presentation of contrasting material. Bach’s BWV 588, its theme perhaps derived from Frescobaldi’s ‘Canzon dopo la pistola’
from *Fiori Musicale*, is set in two sections, which are both fugal in character. A long melodic subject opens the first section, built around a repetitive quaver idea that gradually descends. An additional subject can be heard, chromatic in nature. This affects the subject of the second section, which combines the two. The Canzona, probably an early work of Bach, is marked by expansive phrases, interesting melodic leaps, and harmony that is both reminiscent of its Italian models, but that goes beyond them in scope.

**BWV 589  Alla breve in D major**

The Alla breve BWV 589 is a work that, for all its contrapuntal orderliness, exudes joy. This comes from a certain special melodic quality to its long lines that weave around each other, and from its warm harmony, with gentle suspensions throughout. It is a late work, perhaps dating from the 1740s. Effectively a four-part fugal work in D major, three of the four lines are based on a rising scale, first heard in the soprano, and then added down through the texture in a fugal technique. Balanced with this is its counter melody, descending in shape and gently syncopated against the main line. Also of interest is a series of motifs in crotchets, which direct some interesting harmony in the later sections of the piece. The work builds to a glorious twelve-bar apotheosis over a D (tonic) pedal.

**BWV 575 Fugue in C minor**

BWV 575, perhaps dating from around 1730, opens with an arresting subject. Three short phrases lead the listener up the scale, and a balancing phrase descends to a cadence. Many note the similarity of this subject to that of the Fugue from the E minor keyboard Toccata, BWV 914. Yet unlike that of BWV 914, the C minor’s subject has a fragmented feel — sudden silences that punctuate the phrases — and plays with a broken-chordal texture that is taken up into the rest of the Fugue. The texture of the Fugue is also striking for its emphasis on manual-only writing: it is a special moment when the pedal finally arrives to break the structure with a single F sharp. The manuals respond with a freestyle arpeggiated line, reminiscent of Buxtehude. The remainder of the Fugue takes the fragmentary feel of the preceding music and turns it into short repeating sequences. A final pedal solo (marked ‘Adagio’) rounds off the Fugue to an end that uses the opening rhythm of the subject as a final full stop.

**BWV 594 Concerto after Vivaldi “Grosso Mogul”**

*[Allegro] – Recitativo (Adagio) – Allegro, C major*

The C major Concerto, BWV 594, is a transcription of Vivaldi’s Concerto in D major for violin, RV 208, ‘Il Grosso Mogul’, which was published in Amsterdam in 1716-17 and made by Bach around 1725. It is set on a grand scale, Bach using the organ’s capacity for contrast to full effect to bring out the rhetorical nature of Vivaldi’s original. The Allegro opens with bare Cs, heard in three separate voices, generating rising scales of C major, the voices combining for a tutti cadence. This contrast
of single voices with a full choral texture, effectively mirroring
the contrast of soloists and orchestra in Vivaldi’s original, marks
the remainder of the movement. The use of Rückpositiv provides
further contrast for the virtuosic solo sections, with running
semiquaver passages and fast repetitive fingerwork. The Adagio
is a quasi recitative, with an ornamented line above static chords.
In the final bars a second voice is added to the argument, with
texture filled out for the final cadence. The exciting Allegro finale,
with its insistent repeated arpeggios and rapid scales, allows
for the same contrast between manuals as the first movement,
the original violin and continuo texture fitting naturally under the
organist’s two hands. Bach’s own skill as an organist is reflected
throughout, his writing calling for considerable dexterity.

BWV 551 Prelude with Fugue in A minor
On a much smaller scale than its more famous cousin (BWV 543), BWV 551 nevertheless punches above its weight. The short
Prelude is a twelve-bar miniature, scalar and in two parts. Mostly manualiter, the pedal only enters to underscore the final cadence.
The Fugue is not composed separately, but follows on straight
after the Prelude, and is a larger affair. A compact subject, that
turns on a repeating semitone and includes chromatic moments,
leads into a multi-sectional fugue, full of interest. The main
fugal argument is broken up by smaller sections of contrasting
textures — note the eight bars of slow choral writing in the
middle — that give the whole work a feel that is closer to the
origins of a composer like Buxtehude. Thus, the Fugue gives
way to Buxtehude-like passage work towards the end. Bach’s
authorship is disputed for this work, seemingly written before
Bach had fully assimilated Buxtehude’s style.

BWV 705 Chorale prelude Durch Adams Fall ist ganz verderbt (Kirnb. coll. No. 16)
BWV 705 is a simple setting of the chorale tune, harmonised
in 4 parts, in the stile antico, or ‘old style’. Each phrase of
the chorale is treated in turn, with each phrase of the setting
beginning with a fugal entry in a single voice. BWV 705 is an
organ motet, ‘so similar in style and form to choral movements
of Bach [...] as to look like a transcription’ (Williams, 2003,
444).

BWV 716 Chorale prelude Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr (Fantasia)
BWV 716 is also set in a plain counterpoint, perhaps by a young
Bach (Williams, 2003, 456). As with BWV 716, each phrase of
the chorale is set fugally. The joyful affect of the text, Luther’s
setting of the ‘Gloria in excelsis deo’ is suggested by the triple-
time dance feel. Though written on two staves, in sometimes
sparse three-point counterpoint, the pedal nevertheless takes
a full role.

BWV 544 Prelude and Fugue in B minor
The glorious Prelude and Fugue in B minor, BWV 544, represents
the pinnacle of Bach’s treatment of this form. It dates from
around 1730. The Prelude opens with jaunty, anguished harmony turning above a B pedal, with a fascinating mix of on- and off-beat rhythms, such that the natural accents shift in interesting ways. The initial exposition is long and winding, the music pausing as the section cadences. The episodes in between these larger paragraphs — large structural markers — are contrasting in scale: often manualiter, scalar, yet retaining the melancholy feel of the whole. The Fugue's lengthy subject spins out a simple step-by-step run in quavers, and is paired with a running countersubject that explores its harmonic potential. This continues in spacious main sections that allow both the serious affect and the 'singable' quality of the material to be fully explored. These larger blocks are split by a lengthy episode for manuals that provides contrast, though the whole is unified by its skilful way of creating a complex web of counterpoint from simple materials.

*George Parsons, 2019*
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THE ORGAN OF TRINITY COLLEGE CHAPEL

The organ of Trinity College Chapel was built by the Swiss firm Metzler Söhne in 1976. The design, by Bernhardt Edskes, incorporated the surviving pipework of the two organs built for Trinity by “Father” Bernard Smith in 1694 and 1708. The organ has three manuals and forty-two ranks, of which seven are original. The 8’ Principal on the Rückpositiv is from Smith’s 1694 organ, while the 16’ Principal on the Pedal and the 16’ Principal, 8’ and 4’ Octave, 2’ Quinte, and 2’ Superoctave on the Great are from 1708. The Victorian enlargements to both the instrument and its cases have been removed, and all the pipework is contained within the restored Smith cases, whose carving recalls the school of Grinling Gibbons. The cases are likely to have been designed by Smith and executed by him or one of his team. The salient characteristics of this mechanical-action organ are the meticulous craftsmanship and artistic integrity employed by Metzlers, the durability of the instrument, together with its rich but gentle resonance, its aptness for the acoustics of the Chapel, and its exquisite balance. It is understandably regarded as one of the finest instruments in the United Kingdom.

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DAVID GOODE

David Goode is Organist at Eton College, combining this post with a flourishing performing career.

A music scholar at Eton, and then organ scholar at King’s College, Cambridge, he studied organ with David Sanger and in Amsterdam with 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.

In 1999 he made the first of numerous appearances at the Proms, and in 2002 he made his recital debuts at the RFH and at Symphony Hall, Birmingham, subsequently playing all over Europe, the US, Australia and the Far East. He plays at the AGO National Convention in June 2016. He also has an established partnership with the trumpeter Alison Balsom: in March 2014 they played for the reopening concert of the RFH organ.

Of his Bach CD for Signum in 2013 The Times said: ‘One of Britain’s finest organists puts the 1714 organ in Freiberg Cathedral through its paces …. An exemplary introduction’. 7 CDs of a complete survey of Reger’s organ music have now also appeared, to warm reviews. He has forged a strong relationship over the years on Radio 3 with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and the BBC Singers, and has played numerous contemporary works, including Francis Pott’s Christus (‘a stupendous achievement’ The Times), and Peter Maxwell Davies’ Solstice of Light.

He has also developed a profile as a composer: a set of anthems has been published, together with recordings by the choir of King’s College, Cambridge; and his Blitz Requiem was performed in September 2013 by the Bach Choir at St Paul’s Cathedral, and broadcast on Classic FM. He played at the AGO Convention in June 2016, and was a juror at the 2017 St. Alban’s International Competition.
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