



# BACH EDITION VOLUME II

**Keyboard Works**



## THE WELL-TEMPERED CLAVIER, BOOK I AND II

The Well-Tempered Clavier is the generally accepted English translation of the German title, *Das Wohltemperierte Clavier*, Bach's great collection of 48 paired preludes and fugues, often referred to as simply 'The 48'. It is the best known of Bach's clavier works. Part 1 of The Well-Tempered Clavier was completed at Cöthen in 1722, and Part 2 in Leipzig around 1740. Each part consists of twenty-four preludes and fugues, one prelude and one fugue in each of the twelve major and minor keys, the keys being arranged in chromatic order, alternating in major and minor keys. Consequently, all odd-numbered preludes and fugues are in major keys, and all even-numbered ones are in minor keys. The first prelude and fugue in each of the two books is in C major, the last prelude and fugue in each is in B minor. It is easy to determine the key from the number and the number from the key. If the number is odd, subtract 1 and divide the result by 2, which will give the count of semitones up from C and will determine the tonic of the key. Thus Prelude and Fugue No.15 will be in a major key since 15 is an odd number, and specifically in the key of G major ( $15-1=14$ ;  $14:2=7$ ; 7 semitones from C is G). For even numbers, subtract 2 and then divide the result by 2. Thus, Fugue No.16 will be in the key of G major ( $16-2=14$ ;  $14:2=7$ ). To find the number from a given key, the procedure must be reversed. Count the number of semitones from C to the tonic of the prelude and fugue in question, and then multiply it by 2. If the key is major, add 1; if the is minor add 2. The G major Prelude and Fugue must therefore be No.15 (the interval from C to G is 7 semitones;  $7 \times 2=14$ ; since the tonality is major add 1;  $14+1=15$ ). The Prelude and Fugue in C minor must be No.2; the interval from C to C is 0;  $0 \times 2=0$ ; since this is in a minor key, add 2 to the result:  $0+2=2$ .

The complete original title of The Well-Tempered Clavier Part 1 could be rendered into English as follows: 'The Well-Tempered Clavier, or Preludes and Fugues through all tones and semitones, relating to the major third, that is, Ut Re Mi, as well as those related to the minor third, that is, Re Mi Fa. Compiled and prepared for the benefit and practice of young musicians desirous of learning, as well as for the entertainment of those already versed in this particular study, by Johann Sebastian Bach, Anno 1722.' A rather didactic apologia for such an epoch-making work.

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The term well-tempered refers to the then novel system of equal (or almost equal) temperament, in which the octave is divided into 12 equal (or almost equal) semitones, and the tuning is such that the transposition is possible without altering the ratio of frequencies for different intervals. This system made it possible to play equally well in all the keys, and Bach's collection of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* was the first complete realization and his achievement the apotheosis of even-tempered tuning. The first printed edition appeared almost half a century after Bach's death, in 1799 (Kollman. London). It must be noted that Bach had a precursor in the person of Johann Kaspar Ferdinand Fischer, who published a quarter of a century earlier a collection of 20 preludes and fugues in 19 different keys. He characteristically entitled the collection *Ariadne Musicae*, with the allusion to Ariadne from Greek mythology whose guiding thread helped Theseus find his way out the Cretan labyrinth. Bach must have known Fischer's work, because, in fact, some of Bach's fugal subjects are similar to Fischer's. Particularly interesting is the unmistakable thematic similarity between some of Fischer's fugues and those of Bach in the same key, e.g., those in G minor (WTC1), E major (WTC2), and F major (WTC1), a similarity which is too striking to be incidental. On the other hand, a collection of 24 preludes and fugues written by B.C. Weber under a title identical with that of Bach's first collection is not a forerunner, but an imitation of Bach's work. The date 1689, which appears on the manuscript in the library of the Brussels Conservatory is spurious, since Weber lived from 1712 to 1758.

Equal temperament is usually said to have been invented by Andreas Werckmeister around 1700. This statement is not in accordance with the facts. The history of equal temperament can be traced back to 1518, when H. Grammateus recommended dividing the octave into 10 equal semitones and two of somewhat smaller size. Vincenzo Galilei, in his *Dialogo* (1581), proposed to use a semitone of the frequency  $18/17$  (99.3 cents) which is a very good approximation of the well-tempered semitone. The principle of equal temperament was clearly expounded by the Chinese prince Tsai-yu in 1596 and by the Frenchman Mersenne in 1635. Contrary to common belief, Werckmeister never stated equal temperament correctly. The introduction of equal temperament into musical practice was a very slow process. Whether Bach's famous collection of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* or its less complete predecessor, Fischer's *Ariadne Musica*, referred to equal temperament or merely to a sufficiently close approximation, is not entirely clear. At any rate, the system was not universally adopted in Germany until c.1800, in France and England until c.1850.

When Bach started to assemble his first pupils around him, probably already in Weimar (1708-1717), he undertook, in his thorough manner, to teach them composition through practical examples. The set of organ chora-

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les he composed in this period were clearly designed for church services, but at the same time to show how pieces of this kind should be made, as appears from the inscription on the work: 'Dem Höchsten Gott allein zu Ehren, Dem Nächsten, drauss sich zu belehren.' In English: 'In praise of the Almighty's will, And for my neighbours greater skill.' In his Cöthen years Bach expressed his pedagogical intentions more clearly. For the instruction of his eldest son Wilhelm Friedemann he wrote fifteen two-part preambula (preludes) and fifteen three-part fantasiae. When he collected these pieces into a separate work, calling the two-part pieces 'inventiones' and the three-part ones 'sinfoniae', he provided the new manuscript with a title page which contains the following promise: 'to the lovers of the clavier, and especially those desirous of learning, upright instruction...not alone to have good 'inventiones' (thematic ideas) but to develop them.' The first six Inventions were all built up on short motifs and thus illustrate the technique of elaboration of such motifs. Also the collections of the so-called French and English Suites and the two parts of The Well-Tempered Clavier were designed for pedagogical purposes. More than a third of the preludes of The Well-Tempered Clavier Part 1 were conceived as studies for Wilhelm Friedemann. One source of information of Bach's teaching practice during his Leipzig years is an account dated 1790 by Ernst Ludwig Gerber, the son of Heinrich Nicolaus Gerber: 'Bach accepted him (Gerber senior) with particular kindness because he came from Schwarzburg, and always thereafter called him 'Landsmann' (compatriot). He promised to give him the instruction he desired and asked him whether he had industriously played fugues. At the first lessons he set his Inventions before him. When he had studied these through to Bach's satisfaction, there followed a series of suites, then The Well-Tempered Clavier. This latter work Bach played altogether three times through for him with his unmatched art, and my father counted these among his happiest hours, when Bach, under the pretext of not feeling in the mood to teach, sat himself at one of his fine instruments and thus turned these hours into minutes.'

Part 1 of The Well-Tempered Clavier is more unified in style and purpose than Part 2, which includes compositions from many different periods of Bach's life. In addition to demonstrating the possibility, with the then novel tempered tuning, of using all the keys, Bach had particular didactic intentions in Part 1. In most of the preludes a single specific technical task is given to the player; thus they might be called, in the terminology of a later age, *études*, studies, for which some of Bach's little preludes (BWV 933-943) as well as all the two-part inventions and the three-part sinfonias may be regarded as preliminary studies. The teaching aims of The Well-Tempered Clavier go beyond mere technique, since no two preludes or fugues resemble each other in mood. Each of them represents a different frame of mind, formal construction or technical device. Particularly strong

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is the differentiation of the preludes, all examples of different types of keyboard composition of the late Baroque. The famous first one, Prelude No.1 in C (Part 1) is very much like a lute improvisation. Broken chords serve also as the basis of other preludes (Nos.6 and 15), and sometimes they take on an étude-like (Nos. 2 and 5) or toccata-like character (No.21). No.10 shows a striking transformation. In its primitive form it appeared in Wilhelm Friedemann's *Clavier-Büchlein*. In its final version in *The Well-Tempered Clavier Part 1* it has an added cantilena in the right hand, but also a completely new presto-section which reaffirms the improvisatory character of the earlier version. The two-part Inventions certainly have had some influence on Nos.3, 11 and 13, but also on No.14, 17 and 20. Influences from the three-part Sinfonias can be observed in Nos.9, 18, 19 and 23. Preludes Nos.4, 8, 16 and 22 are aria-like pieces resembling the slow movements of a church-sonata. In No.12 broken chords, invention-like features and aria-style are fused into an unusual but very beautiful combination.

The preludes of *The Well-Tempered Clavier Part 2* differ from those of Part 1. There is only a single arpeggio piece (No.3), and then its second part consists of a brief fugato. Also No.22 resembles a three-part fugue. Contrary to this procedure, where fugue-like pieces are employed as introductions to fugues, Bach also composed luxuriant and abundantly ornamented preludes that most effectively prepare the following contrapuntal fugues (Nos.1 and 16). Also the concerto form is used, in Prelude No.17, and the style of a French Overture (No.13).

The fugues, wonderfully varied in subjects, texture, form, and treatment, constitute a compendium of all the possibilities of concentrated, monothematic fugal writing. The ancient *ricercare* is represented (Part 1, No. 4 in C sharp minor), as well as the use of inversion, canon, and augmentation (No. 8, E flat minor), virtuosity in a fugue with a *da capo* ending (No. 3, C sharp major), and many other styles. There are pieces not only with three voices (Nos.2, 3, 6-9, 11, 13, 15, 19 and 21) and four voices (Nos. 1, 5, 12, 14, 16-18, 20, 23, and 24), but also with two voices (No.10) and five (Nos.4 and 22). While the themes usually establish a firm sense of tonality, there are also chromatic, modulating and highly adventurous fugue subjects in Nos.7, 10, 18 and 24. Several fugues have a countersubject (a melody combined with the fugal theme, Nos.7, 9, 10, 13-16, 23 and 24), or even two counter subjects (two melodies combined with the fugal subject, Nos.2, 3, 12, 18 and 21). Fugue No.5, a great favorite of keyboard players, contrasts heavily with its forerunner No.4, which is in the old-fashioned *ricercar* style of Froberger with long extended notes. No.5 is more loosely constructed and closer to Handel than to Bach. A climax is reached in the striking No.8. In this breathtaking complex piece the main

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theme, its inversion, augmentation and double augmentation are developed in two-part and three-part strettos.

In Part 2, the Fugue in D major (No. 5) may be mentioned as a superlative example of concentrated abstract musical structure using the simplest materials, while the Prelude and Fugue in F sharp minor (No. 14) is outstanding for beauty of themes and proportions. As in the organ fugues, each subject in Bach's clavier figures is a clearly defined musical personality, of which the entire fugue is to be a logical development and projection. In the double fugue No.23 the set reaches its climax, a powerful first theme later joined by a gently moving second theme. No.24 gives the impression of an appendix to the whole set, since in this carefree rococo-like dance Bach seems to have absorbed the musical style of the younger generation, of his sons Carl Philipp Emanuel and, maybe, even his youngest Johann Christian.

*Clemens Romijn*



## CD II-5 / CD II-6

### SIX PARTITAS BWV 825-830

The works Bach published during his lifetime only form a tiny fraction of his entire oeuvre. This seems strange to a modern artist or composer, who does all he can to get his works published, because that is the only way of getting known and gaining recognition. Long before Bach published his first works, the six partitas recorded here, he had already enjoyed a European reputation. In 1717 Mattheson, the famous Hamburg music critic, had written about Bach in glowing terms. All over Germany Bach's organ and harpsichord playing was recognized as something unprecedented. As a tester of organs, he was both highly esteemed and feared, for organ builders considered his verdict on an instrument decisive. Any young musician, who could show a testimonial from Bach or claim to have been his pupil, was assured of a post as organist, cantor or capellmeister. It will probably remain a mystery why the famous Bach waited until his fortieth year, until 1726, to have his Opus 1 printed. And then, sales of the partitas were miserable. Bach sold some copies himself. The remainder came into the hands of first Boetius and then Breitkopf. In 1760, ten years after Bach's death, Breitkopf was still offering unsold copies in his catalogue.

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Yet, from an artistic point of view the *partitas* proved an enormous success. Even though very few people bought the printed edition, numerous handwritten copies circulated and many harpsichord players included them in their repertoire. According to Forkel (in his famous first biography of Bach from 1802), the publication of Bach's opus I caused 'much ado in the musical world of his time. Such excellent compositions for the clavier had never been seen and heard before. Anyone who had learnt to perform well some pieces out of them could make his fortune in the world thereby; and even in our times, a young artist might gain acknowledgment by doing so, they are so brilliant, well-sounding, expressive and always new.'

There exists some confusion about the term '*partita*'. In 17th or 18th century music it signified either a suite or a series of variations. The original and proper meaning of the word is variation. In Trabaci's *Ricercate, canzone, ...partite diverse* (1615) as well as in Frescobaldi's *Toccate e partite d'intavolatura* (1614) and in other early Italian publications, *partita* always meant a series of variations, not a suite (a set of dance pieces). It was thus (meaning variation) that the term was used by Pachelbel (1690), Böhm, and in Bach's *Chorale partitas* for organ. How the term came to adopt the meaning of suite is not entirely clear. Possibly the denomination '*Parthien*' (for suites), which appears in the publications of Froberger (1693), Kuhnau (1692) and Theophil Muffat (1726), is derived not from the Italian word '*partita*', but from the French word '*partie*' (movement), a term which may have denoted suite-like compositions. Bach used the designation *partita* for his six suites published in his *Clavier-Übung I* and for those for violin solo and for flute solo. Several of the harpsichord *partitas* show Italian features, such as the Italian names '*sinfonia*' and '*burlesca*', and the preference for the Italian *corrente* in stead of the French *courante* as the second dance movement.

Bach's clavier suites show the influence of French and Italian as well as of German models. There are three sets of six suites each: the French and English Suites, composed at Cöthen, and the six *Partitas* published separately between 1726 and 1730 and then collected in 1731 as Part of the *Clavier-Übung*. Part II of the *Clavier-Übung* also contains a large *Partita* in B minor, entitled '*Overture in the French style for a harpsichord with two manuals*.' The designations French and English for the suites composed at Cöthen are not Bach's own, and have no descriptive significance. The suites in both sets consist of the standard four dance movements (*allemande*, *courante*, *sarabande*, *gigue*) with additional short movements between the *sarabande* and *gigue*. Each of the English suites opens with a prelude. Some of these preludes illustrate particularly well the skill with

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which Bach transferred Italian ensemble forms to the keyboard: the prelude to the third suite, for example, is a concerto Allegro movement with alternating tutti and ritornellos. (An even more striking adaptation of the concerto form is the Concerto in the Italian style, a harpsichord piece which utilizes the two manuals of the instrument to emphasize the tutti-solo contrasts.) The dances in the English suites are based on French models, and include several examples of the double or ornamented repetition of a movement. In the French suites, the second movement is more often an Italian corrente than a French courante.

The Clavier-Übung, Part I (1731, although published in installments in 1726-1731) contains six suites, called Partitas, in which sets of highly stylized dances are preceded by different kinds of introductory movements, variously entitled Praeludium, Praeambulum, Sinfonia, Fantasia, Overture, and Toccata, all forms and types of late Baroque keyboard music. This third collection of keyboard suites (BWV 825-830) occupies a special place in Bach's entire oeuvre, because it was the first work that he was to engrave and publish himself in the period 1726-1741. He entitled the series Clavier-Übung, and each separate suite Partita. This idea was probably inspired by Bach's predecessor Kuhnau, who had achieved great success with his two series of keyboard suites, which he had also published (in 1698 and 1702) under the title Clavier-Übung and the suite-title partita. Bach was probably assisted with the engraving by his 17-year-old son Emanuel, who himself had made copper-plates of his first works. Like the English suites, the partitas begin with an introductory piece which is of a different character in each partita - sometimes like an invention (partita I), sometimes a French overture (partita II and IV), and sometimes a fantasy (partita III). The pieces display French and Italian characteristics, but they also seem to anticipate the expressive melodic style of Emanuel Bach. As in Kuhnau's partitas, all Bach's six partitas have the dances of the classical suite - allemande, courante, sarabande, gigue - (except for the omission of the gigue from No.2). But Bach went further than Kuhnau in his addition of 'andern Galanterien', as he call them on the title-page. Every partita has at least one. Clearly Bach intended to give each partita its individual distinct character.

*Clemens Romijn*





## KEYBOARDS WORKS KLAVIERWERKE 1700-1710

### **The original musical scores of Johann Sebastian Bach**

We know that the original manuscripts of J.S. Bach were in the possession of members of his family. The majority were in the hands of Carl Philipp, and others in the possession of Anna Magdalena and Wilhelm Friedemann.

Today the majority of these relics are preserved in the national libraries in East and West Berlin; this collection forms the basis of the Bach-Archives in Leipzig. The absurd situation created by current circumstances has added to the dissemination of this heritage. There are a few manuscripts scattered throughout the world which we can account for, but in regards to some certain familiar pieces, we have no idea as to their whereabouts.

In addition to these invaluable scores, there were also numerous copies made by his pupils and members of the Bach family (especially Anna Magdalena) in preparation for performances. For Bach, who himself made considerable use of the technique of this system, copying represented one of the surest teaching methods. Fortunately this practice has provided us with this precious inheritance.

All of Bach's works have been available in published form for a long time and it could be argued that his music now occupies its rightful place. But this is by no means the case, quite the contrary in fact, since, barring a few exceptions, from the vast repertoire he produced the works of the young Bach are never played, with the exception of the Toccatas BWV 910 – 916 which were written between 1705 and 1712.

For a long time considered of dubious origin, 17 of the 29 works presented in this collection have, nevertheless, been published (Breitkopf & Hartel, and Peters), but have never really aroused other musicians. There are therefore some works, admittedly limited in number, which are all the more fascinating because they shed new light on the work and the life of the adolescent Bach. It will be necessary to await the results of painstaking musicological work being carried out, amongst others, by the Neue Bachgesellschaft, to dispel the doubts exist-

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ting on the authenticity of these works. It has taken a hundred years of patient research.

The brilliant preludes and fugues for organ BWV 532, 533 and 575, the famous Pastorale BWV 590, as well as the great cantatas “Aus der Tiefe rufe ich, Herr zu dir” BWV 131, “Gott ist mein König” BWV 71, and “Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit”, “Actus Tragicus” BWV 106 can all be dated with certainty between 1700 and 1710.

No doubt influenced by the obvious maturity of the works of his youth, certain people dated the works ten or fifteen years later than the date now attributed to them. Nevertheless the difficulties of establishing dates remain very real.

The Bach expert A. Basso defines the numerous problems which the exegesis poses: “The most chaotic and confused sphere in which Bach practised his talent is that of music for the harpsichord (...). Many isolated pages exist for which it is difficult, on the one hand, to establish their authenticity, and on the other hand, to determine their chronological position”.

In order to do this, it has been necessary to draw up a historical classification, based on the biographical information gleaned from evidence which was *a priori* general in its scope.

History reveals much evidence of his learning abilities, yet nothing remains on his first attempts at composition. Friedrich Blume, describing the young Bach, believed that as regards to the period in question (between 1695 and 1700), there is not the slightest indication of his musical progress. There is no doubt that from the age of fifteen he possessed sufficient musical and instrumental maturity to be able to compose. Still it should not be forgotten that our knowledge of Bach’s musical environment does not provide us with any more information.

It was generally accepted that Bach’s first work (the origin of which was doubted for many years) was the pre-1707 manuscript chorale BWV 704. However, it now seems that the chorale Partitas for organ BWV 766, 767 and 768 predate BWV 704. The Prelude of the Partita del tuono Terzo BWV 833 with its archaic style, should at the same time be considered as a composition for the harpsichord dating from between 1700 and 1704.

Dating, identifying, establishing chronological order and in particular locating the places where the works may

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have been written would seem to be more a feat of archeological research than musicological research.

It will be necessary to call upon the very latest techniques to arrive at conclusions which will determine with certainty one way or the other. In fact the study of the origins of the paper, the constituents of the inks, the written forms, the shape of the notes and the letters, the search for similarities and likenesses demand a wealth of means which were not available in the 19th Century. Once this work has been completed, the analyst will examine, from a purely musicological point of view, the style, existing musical origins, and finally, the many characteristic and essential parameters of previous compositions. The pioneers have mainly concentrated on corresponding styles, believing this to be a way of dating and outlining a chronological order.

Spitta was the first to rely upon the authority of these similarities, which we might call “evolutionary stylistic”, partly the result of influences which have been chronologically defined. The inadequacy of the procedure, especially attribution of possible dates, led him to draw conclusions far removed from today’s certainties.

However this may be, and thanks to the invaluable work of the patient scholars of the 19th and 20th Centuries, the indefatigable research of Spitta, Schalzriedt, Krüger (1970), Schmieder (1976), Eichberg (1975), Wolff (1980), Basso (1983), and the publications of the *Neue Bach Ausgabe kritischer Bericht* (1982), the following have been definitively declared as the work of J.S. Bach: BWV 820, 821, 822, 823, 832, 833, 917, 922, 923, 940, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 951A, 954, 955, 963, 965, 966, 967, 989, 992, 993, 996. Uncertainty still reigns over the concerto e fuga BWV 909, but there is strong evidence in favour of its authenticity.

In this extraordinary re-examination of the sources, there was still one point which had to be clarified, and this is not just a minor point. In what town, in what place did J.S. Bach write and at what age?

Bach left Ohrdruf in the spring of 1700 to settle in Lüneburg (BWV 822). On several occasions he made frequent trips to meet the masters: Böhm and Buxtehude.

In March 1703 in Hamburg he heard Reinken; in Celle he became familiar with French music, finally he stopped in Weimar where he settled down (BWV 909). However, having spent barely four months at court, he left again for Arnstadt. It is probably there, moved by the departure of his brother Johann Jacob, oboist to Charles

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XII of Sweden, that he wrote the Capriccio sopra la Lontananza BWV 992.

Having obtained four weeks leave to go and hear Buxtehude in Lübeck, he stayed there from October 1705 until February 1706. He remained in Lüneburg until June 1707. The works BWV 820, 821, 823, 832, 833, 955, 963, 967, and 993 definitely date from this period. Next, on 15 June 1707 he was appointed organist at the church of St. Blaise in Mühlhausen. On 17 October he married his cousin Maria Barbara, the daughter of the organist of Gehren, Johann Michael Bach. He finally returned to Weimar on 25 June 1708. Bach was 23 years old, and we can reasonably consider this time as the fruition of his youth.

In 1708, his daughter Catharina Dorothea was born, followed by Wilhelm Friedemann in 1710. The compositions BWV 917, 922, 923, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 951A, 954, 958, 959, 965, 966, 989, and 996 date from this period.

The Lautensuite BWV 996, originally written for the lute in E minor, was rewritten for the harpsichord in A minor by Bach himself. This lone Bach manuscript can now be found in the Royal Library in Bruxelles. The cover of the booklet with this album represents the start of the “Preludio con la Suite” from this work.

Carried away by a passion for an art which he mastered as no-one else before him, and which many would try to emulate without ever succeeding, Bach reveals in the 29 pieces of this collection a joyful impish exuberance, and a desire to live his music to the full, together with an unrivalled depth and nobility of emotion. Never, even in his earliest youth, did he cease studying, learning and probing into the experience of his elders, the lucid wisdom of a friend, striving indefatigably towards the masterpiece, which one day would surpass them all.

Bach was the archetypal craftsman, never creating anything with which he was not completely satisfied, each step carved, deliberated upon and completed with a master's touch. He was never a Mozart, whose legendary precociousness moved the whole of Europe in his time. Yet Bach and Mozart have one thing in common: there is not one work of their youth, judged to be minor in the total scope of their compositions, which would not have been declared a masterpiece if written by any other composer.

*Yves Bessières*



## ITALIAN CONCERTO BWV 971 / FRENCH OVERTURE BWV 831 CHROMATIC FANTASY & FUGUE BWV 903

In the first biography of Johann Sebastian Bach (1802) by Johann Nicolaus Forkel, this great admirer of Bach's oeuvre made the following note: 'Chromatische Fantasie und Fuge. Unendliche Mühe habe ich mir gegeben noch ein Stück dieser Art von Bach zu finden. Aber vergeblich. Diese Fantasie ist einzig und hat nie ihres Gleichen gehabt. Ich erhielt sie zuerst von Wilh. Friedemann [Bach] aus Braunschweig. Einer seiner und meiner Freunde, der gerne Knittelverse machte, schrieb auf ein beygelegtes Blatt:

Anbey kommt an  
Etwas Musik von Sebastian,  
Sonst genannt: Fantasia chromatica;  
Bleibt schön in alle Saecula.

Sonderbar ist es, dass diese so ausserordentliche kunstreiche arbeit auch auf den allerungeübtesten Zuhörer Eindruck macht, wenn sie nur irgend rein vorgetragen wird'. ('Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue. I have taken infinite pains to discover another piece of this kind by Bach, but in vain. This fantasia is unique, and never had its like. I first received it from Brunswick, from Wilh. Friedemann. A friend of his and mine who liked to write doggerel, wrote on an inserted leaf:

Here, my good man,  
Is some music by Sebastian,  
Called otherwise: Fantasia chromatica,  
Will last through all the saecula.

It is remarkable that this work, though of such intricate workmanship, makes an impression even on the most unpracticed hearer if it is but performed at all clearly'.)

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The prophecy in the above poem has remained true until today: Bach's Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue is among Bach's most frequently performed works. Perhaps the poet was helped in his assessment by the fact that during Bach's lifetime and for decades after his death this brilliant virtuoso work in grand style for harpsichord solo circulated in a large number of copies. It is a remarkable mystery why this entrancing work did not appear in print until the beginning of the 19th century, while many Rococo trivialities sold like hot cakes. This turbulent and expressive harpsichord work probably originates from Bach's Cöthen period (1717-1723). Its exceptional nature lies more in its expressive strength and the use of chromatic and enharmonic elements than in the actual form. Despite its emotional intensity, the fantasy has a logical structure. The opening toccata-like section is full of scales, broken chords and arpeggios. The second section is an instrumental recitative, and the third part makes an effective combination of both elements. The succeeding fugue is based on a subject which also makes abundant use of chromatic progressions. The opening is strictly contrapuntal, but the style gradually becomes freer, recalling the rhapsodical and improvisatory character of the fantasy. Full chords of up to eight parts are introduced, and powerful octaves in the left hand bring the fugue to its final climax.

Bach published his *Clavier-Übung* Part II in 1735, shortly after his 50th birthday. It comprises the 'Concerto nach Italienischem Gusto' and the 'Overture nach Französischer Art', works both specially written for a two-manual harpsichord. At the same time each of the two compositions is modeled on a different orchestral genre: the Italian Concerto transfers the forms and styles of a Vivaldi-like concerto to harpsichord, while the Overture in French Style is an imitation of the typical orchestral suite popular in Germany during the late Baroque. Some of the preludes of the English Suites already illustrate particularly well the skill with which Bach transferred Italian ensemble forms to the keyboard: the prelude to the third suite, for example, is a concerto Allegro movement with alternating tutti and ritornellos. An even more striking adaptation of the concerto form is the Concerto in the Italian Style, usually called the Italian Concerto, a harpsichord piece which utilizes the two manuals of the instrument to emphasize the tutti-solo contrasts.

Also in the French Overture the often awkward manual changes are designed to obtain an orchestral effect. As in the orchestral overtures, Bach employed the title Overture (sic!) as 'pars pro toto' for an entire suite, in which the overture is by far the most substantial movement. Another similarity between this overture and those for orchestra lies in the fact that Bach chose to omit the allemande included in all his harpsichord suites. Of interest is that Bach first composed this work (in about 1731) in c minor, transposing it later to b minor. We do not

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know the reason (key structure, temperament, affect?), but we do know that Bach made far-reaching alterations to the notation of the first movement of the overture: all up-beat figures of two or three semiquavers in the c-minor version became demisemiquavers in the b-minor version, resulting in a much sharper (overdotted) rhythm. Apparently Bach doubted whether the interpretation of this notation familiar in his own surroundings was self-evident in wider circles (i.e. via publication). That his alterations, 250 years later, were to form a very concrete indication of over-dotting, he probably did not anticipate.

*Clemens Romijn*

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**CD II-11**

## GOLDBERG VARIATIONS BWV 988

In his Leipzig period, probably in the late 1730s, Bach came into contact with some personalities of the higher aristocracy in Dresden. This was due to his connections with the Dresden electoral court. One of these aristocrats was Hermann Carl, Count von Keyserlingk, who became a very special patron of Bach's. Through his intervention Bach was nominated 'court composer to the King of Poland and the Elector of Saxony.' The Count maintained a small private band, in which a pupil of Bach and of his son Wilhelm Friedemann played the harpsichord: Johann Gottlieb Goldberg. An anecdote handed down to us through the first Bach-biography by Johann Nicolaus Forkel (1802) links the genesis of the *Aria mit verschiedenen Veränderungen* (BWV 988), now known as the Goldberg Variations, with Keyserlingk and Goldberg: 'The Count was often sickly, and then had sleepless nights. At these times Goldberg, who lived in the house with him, had to pass the night in an adjoining room to play something to him when he could not sleep. The Count once said to Bach that he would like to have some clavier pieces for his Goldberg, which should be of such a soft and somewhat lively character that he might be cheered up a bit by them in his sleepless nights. Bach thought he could best fulfil this wish by variations. The Count thereafter called them nothing but 'his' variations. He was never weary of hearing them. And for a long time, when the sleepless night came, he used to say, 'Dear Goldberg, do play me one of my variations.'

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In his Goldberg Variations, Bach summarized the characteristic species of Baroque keyboard music, the theme and variations. The Aria with thirty different Variations, published in 1741 as Part IV of the Clavier-Übung and known as the Goldberg Variations is organized in the complete fashion of many of the compositions from the latter part of Bach's life. The theme is a sarabande (slow, majestic baroque dance) in two balanced sections, the bass and harmonic structure of which are preserved in all thirty variations. The form of the whole is that of a chaconne or passacaglia. The variations are grouped by threes, the last of each group being a canon, with the canons at successive intervals from the unison (first canon) to the ninth (last canon). The thirtieth and last variation, however, is a quodlibet, a mixture of two popular song melodies combined in counterpoint above the fundamental bass. After this the theme is repeated da capo. The noncanonic variations are of many different types, including inventions, fughettas, a French overture, ornamental slow arias, and, at regular intervals, bravura pieces for two manuals. The diverse moods and styles in these variations are unified by means of the recurring bass and harmonies and also by the symmetrical order in which the movements are arranged; the entirety is a perfectly organized structure of great proportions. In the Goldberg Variations three essential characteristics of Bach's keyboard music are united: stylistic diversity, virtuosity and strict counterpoint. These elements correspond with the tripartite grouping of the variations: the character piece, the virtuoso piece and the canon. In the course of the work all three become more and more characteristic: the style becomes more divers in every following character piece, the virtuosity increases gradually, and canon technique increases gradually in interval and has even a novel element of the quodlibet, mentioned above.

Probably the Goldberg Variations were first performed publicly by Bach himself at one of his last concerts in the Leipzig Collegium Musicum in 1741. The events in the famous Forkel anecdote - the young virtuoso Bach pupil (only fourteen years old!) playing the work during sleepless night for his patron Keyserlingk - probably took place shortly after publication, for Bach stayed in Keyserlingk's Dresden home in November 1741.

*Clemens Romijn*





## ENGLISH SUITES

In the first Bach biography, dating from 1802, Johann Nicolaus Forkel explained that the six ‘English Suites’ were thus entitled because Bach was said to have written them upon the request of ‘a prominent Englishman’. The only confirmation is found on the title-page of one of the manuscripts of the First Suite in A major, which indeed bears the words ‘Fait pour les Anglois.’ It was suspected for some time that Forkel’s explanation was no more than an anecdote, and now we know that both titles, English and French Suites, do not originate from Bach. Moreover, if he had indeed written the English Suites in response to a commission, more details would surely be available, as in the case of the Goldberg Variations. The titles are presumed to have originated in the circle of Bach’s friends and pupils, perhaps to distinguish between the two series of suites. In this manner the English ‘Suites avec leurs Préludes’ were called ‘English’ to distinguish them from the ‘smaller French Suites’, because they were thought to have been composed after examples by a composer living in England. Though Purcell and Handel were suggested, attention moved to Dieupart when considerable similarity with his suites was revealed. Dieupart lived in London from 1707 until his decease, and Bach was familiar with his harpsichord suites and copied at least one of them.

Bach probably commenced the English Suites in Weimar and wrote additional material in Cöthen and Leipzig, arranging them to form the collection of six works which have come down to us. We know that Bach’s Leipzig pupil Gerber studied and performed them under the composer’s guidance in 1725.

The works which Bach wrote in series are almost always marked by a systematic and concentrated pursuit of a particular genre or composition model, or a national style. His harpsichord suites are influenced by French, Italian and German examples. Apart from a large number of less familiar separate suites for the harpsichord, there are three series: the French and English Suites (both completed as series in Cöthen and Leipzig in 1718-1725), and the Six Partitas, which originally appeared in separate instalments in 1726-1730 and were published as a series in the first part of the *Clavier-Übung* in 1731. The second part of the *Clavier-Übung* also contains a suite, the large-scale Partita in B minor, entitled ‘Overture in the French style, for a harpsichord with two manuals’.

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The French and English Suites all consist of a sequence of the standard dance movements allemande, courante, sarabande and gigue, with extra short ‘galanteries’ between the sarabande and gigue. The dances in the English Suites are based on French models and include ‘doubles’ or ornamented, variant repeats of the preceding movement. Unlike the French Suites, which begin immediately with the allemande, the English Suites commence with a prelude. Some of these demonstrate how skillful Bach was in transferring the Italian orchestral style to the harpsichord. Thus the prelude to the Third English Suite in G minor resembles an Allegro from an Italian concerto, in which ripieno passages alternate with solos. An even more striking example was to come in Leipzig in the form of the Italian Concerto, a harpsichord concerto in which Bach employs the two manuals of the instrument for orchestral effects such as ripieno and solo contrasts. The prelude to the Fourth English Suite in F major also seems to have strayed from an Italian concerto. Certain motifs in this piece appear to be borrowed from the first movement of the Fifth Brandenburg Concerto. The tripartite da capo form (ABA) of the preludes to suites nos. 2, 5 and 6 creates a sort of musical triptych. In some suites, such as the third, the prelude is the most substantial movement, while in others, including the first, it is a rather light-weight prologue to the actual suite, in the form of a short, toccata-like introduction flowing into a flourish of quavers.

The English Suites are on a grander scale than the French, making more demands upon the technical skills of the player and having a more stylised character, further removed from the original folk dances. An interesting aspect of the series is the order of keys, descending stepwise through a fifth: A major, A minor, G minor, F major, E minor and D minor – mainly minor keys. Moreover, while in the French suites Bach wrote all the dances within a single suite in the same key, in the English Suites the trio-like movements move to related keys. In terms of harmony and complexity of texture the English Suites are again of a higher order, with full chords and overflowing part-writing. The allemandes are followed not by a single courante as in the French Suites, but by two, plus their ‘doubles’ or ornamented variants. Perhaps Bach wished to leave the choice to the player.

*Clemens Romijn*



## CONCERTO TRANSCRIPTIONS AFTER VARIOUS COMPOSERS

The seventeen concertos for harpsichord solo ((BWV 972-987 and 592a) and the five concertos for organ solo (BWV 592-596) are the earliest signs of Bach's interest in the Italian concerto of Vivaldi and his contemporaries. They are all transcriptions of existing works by different composers, made while Bach was employed in Weimar (1708-1717). In addition to some ten concertos by Vivaldi (BWV 593, 594, 596, 972, 973, 975, 976, 978 and 980), Bach arranged concertos by Alessandro Marcello (1684-1750) (BWV 974), Giuseppe Torelli (1658-1709) (BWV 979), Benedetto Marcello (1686-1739) (BWV 981), Johann Ernst von Sachsen Weimar (BWV 982, 984, 987, 592a), Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767) (BWV 985), and three concertos of uncertain origin (BWV 977, 983, 986).

From the 19th century onwards various theories have been proposed as to the reason why Bach made transcriptions for solo harpsichord of concertos originally written for one or more solo instruments and orchestra. One such theory assumes that this was Bach's way of assimilating the genre of the Italian concerto. This is supported by a passage from the first Bach biography by Johann Nikolaus Forkel (1749-1818), *Über Johann Sebastian Bachs Leben, Kunst und Kunstwerke* (Leipzig 1802):

'Vivaldi's Concertos for the violin, which were then just published, served him for such a guide. He so often heard them praised as admirable compositions that he conceived the happy idea of arranging them all for his clavier. He studied the chain of the ideas, their relation to each other, the variations of the modulations, and many other particulars.'

Further on Forkel mentions that the transcriptions may also have been used as 'musica sub communione' (music during the communion): 'In his time a concerto or sonata was usually played on one instrument or another in church during communion'.

Johann Gottfried Walther (1684-1748) also made 14 known transcriptions of concertos by composers including Albinoni, Blamr, Corelli, Gentili, Gregori, Manzia, Meck, Taglietti, Telemann, Torelli and Vivaldi. Walther was

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a cousin of Bach and organist of the Petrus- und Pauluskirche in Weimar while Bach was employed at the ducal court of Wilhelm Ernst von Sachsen-Weimar. While it is difficult to establish which of the two arranged their concertos first, we can surely assume that they would have discussed their transcriptions together.

Another theory attempts to answer the question how Bach became acquainted with the music of Vivaldi and his contemporaries. Prince Johann Ernst of Weimar (1696-1715), Duke Wilhelm Ernst's nephew, is believed to have played a crucial role. In his monumental Bach biography dating from 1873, Philipp Spitta wrote that all musicians in the prince's circle, to which Bach and Walther belonged, were interested in the Italian concerto, if only to please the prince. Nearly sixty years later Charles Sanford Terry wrote: Bach's painstaking transcriptions of works by other composers were most certainly encouraged by the prince.'

More is revealed by Johann Mattheson (1681-1764) in *Das Beschützte Orchestre* (Hamburg 1717): 'That this sort of music can be performed on a full-voiced instrument like the organ or harpsichord was proved some years ago by the celebrated but blind organist of the Nieuwe Kerk at the Dam in Amsterdam, Jan Jacob de Graaf. He knew all the latest three- and four-part Italian concertos, sonatas and such by memory, and was able to perform them in my presence with great clarity and splendour.'

Johann Jacob de Graaf (ca.1672-1738) had been appointed organist of the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam in 1702. Mattheson must have heard him play shortly after 1710, probably when he visited The Netherlands as a diplomat in connection with the Peace of Utrecht (1712/13). Early in 1713 Prince Johann Ernst, who studied at the university of Utrecht in 1711-1713, also visited Amsterdam, at that time the European centre of music publishing, and probably likewise heard De Graaf play his concerto transcriptions on the organ. Shortly before, in 1712, Antonio Vivaldi's 'L'Estro Armonico' op. 3 had been published in Amsterdam by Roger & Le Cène. The prince had a considerable amount of music purchased for his court in Weimar, and took composition lessons with Walther upon his return in July 1713. Thus, under Walther's guidance, Johann Ernst wrote his first opus, *Six Concertos in the Italian style*. It is quite possible that the prince commissioned Bach and Walther in the same period to transcribe and compose works in the Italian style. Bach's 17 transcriptions must have been made between July 1713 and July 1714.

Since the concertos had to be 'translated' for the harpsichord, Bach actually went further than simply copying

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them, taking certain liberties and approaching the works as an arranger. He added rich embellishment to solo passages, shortened excessive sequences and changed tempo and expression marks. He also made the middle voices more interesting, changed simple chordal writing into broken chords and improved routine harmonic progressions by adding extra dissonances. Several years later this apprenticeship in transcription and arrangement was to bear fruit in such works as the celebrated Brandenburg Concertos.

*Clemens Romijn*



**CD II-16/17**

## FRENCH SUITES

As far as we know Bach's first acquaintance with French music dated from around 1700 during his grammar school years in Lüneburg. The Michaelisschule attended by Bach boasted a 'Ritteracademie', a school for the sons of wealthy nobility where French was spoken and French customs and etiquette were taught. The neighbouring Duke of Celle's French orchestra frequently gave concerts of French music there, sometimes being joined by Bach and other pupils. Around the same time the organist of the Johanniskirche, Georg Böhm, introduced Bach to French harpsichord music and the appropriate manner of playing. It is safe to assume that Bach would have played the harpsichord suites and perhaps the freely notated *préludes non-mesurés* (without barlines). Both genres had been developed by 17th-century French lutenists and harpsichordists including Denis Gaultier, Gallot, Blancroche, Chambonnières and Louis Couperin. Thanks to Böhm's introduction, Bach the German harpsichordist was able to perform perfumed French dance music of the era of Louis XIV at gatherings of the nobility. Ever anxious to learn, Bach thus became initiated into the *galant* world and refined style of the French suite, the musical export article par excellence of that land. The bigwigs of the time in this delicate and richly ornamented genre were Jean-Henry D'Anglebert, François Couperin, Jean-Philippe Rameau and Louis Marchand.

Among the harpsichord pieces which Bach composed in the French style, besides many separate suites, are the English and French Suites (both completed as series in Cöthen and Leipzig in 1718-1725), and the Six Partitas,

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first published in instalments in 1726-30 and later as a series in part I of the *Clavier-Übung* in 1731. Part II of the *Clavier-Übung* includes another suite, the large-scale Partita in B minor entitled 'Ouverture in the French style, for a harpsichord with two manuals'. It is certain that the title French Suites does not originate from Bach's hand.

As in the English Suites, Bach included in the French Suites the customary sequence of allemande, courante, sarabande and gigue, with additional short 'galanteries' between the sarabande and gigue. The dances are based on French models, but do not have the 'doubles' found in the English Suites, where some movements are repeated in an ornamented version. Moreover, the French Suites have no preludes and are generally of a more modest scale, less stylised and less demanding in technical terms. Major and minor keys are employed equally, the first three suites being in minor keys and the other three in major, giving rise to the following key pattern: D minor, C minor, B minor, E flat major, G major and E major.

The French Suites played a role in domestic music making in Bach's home and in his teaching. Anna Magdalena copied the first five suites in her first *Notenbüchlein* (1722), and three years later she included the first two once more in her second *Notenbüchlein*. Moreover, a considerable number of copies from the circle of Bach's pupils survive, indicating that in Bach's teaching these pieces were situated somewhere between the Inventions and the Well-Tempered Clavier in terms of difficulty. Remarks recorded by Bach's pupil Kirnberger reveal that it was both fashionable and self-evident to indulge in French music: 'Good music teachers have for their pupils mainly recommended dances of different types. Through the different time signatures, their rhythm and movement, which must be clearly marked, the heaviness or lightness of performance, through the multiplicity of character and expression, the players practised all sorts of difficulties and became accustomed to eloquent, expressive and varied performance. One should not claim that these dance pieces have no taste, for they have more than that. They have indeed character and expression, training the player in a cantabile manner of playing and in movement and rhythm. They enlarge the native circle of experience with dance melodies of various nations, and one may even claim that each suite, despite all national differences, forms a reflection of the musical spirit of a united Europe.'

*Clemens Romijn*



## TOCCATAS

Bach's seven toccatas for the harpsichord (BWV 910-916) are among the most remarkable and fascinating works of his early years. Although they cannot be precisely dated they are assumed to have been written in Arnstadt, Mühlhausen and Weimar, roughly between 1705-1712. Bach's models were the north-German organ toccatas by composers such as Matthias Weckmann and Dietrich Buxtehude, and possibly toccatas by Johann Jacob Froberger, who in turn was influenced by Girolamo Frescobaldi. Common to all these works are the several interconnected sections, the alternation of improvisatory and strict (fugal) styles, and the impression of free forms. The early toccatas by Frescobaldi, for example, contain more sections than those by Bach, but because Frescobaldi's sections are shorter his toccatas are on a considerably smaller scale.

Bach chose a four-movement structure for most of his toccatas. A virtuosic introduction with all sorts of dramatic passagework, scales and broken chords is linked to a slow section, both pensive and serious. This calm section forms the ideal preparation for the severity and activity of the second movement, a fugue. A slow, third movement follows, after which the toccata ends with a second fugue and a short coda in the style of the opening.

A striking feature in the period up to about 1700 is that the toccata-like and fugal sections are often not separate entities. An improvisatory passage may suddenly lead into a fugal section or vice versa – the styles may permeate one another. After 1700 the two became clearly separated, as is demonstrated by Bach's toccatas.

It is believed that Bach probably intended to arrange his toccatas in a series of six, as he did later with the French and English Suites and the Partitas. For one of the seven toccatas, that in G major (BWV 916), is indeed a special case. It seems to lean more towards the Italian concerto of Vivaldi, and deviates from the other six by reason of its tripartite structure. It may be seen as a forerunner of the Italian Concerto, 'ein Concerto nach Italienischem Gusto', and in one of the manuscripts it is indeed described as 'Toccatà seu Concerto' - toccata or concerto. The series of six toccatas seems to have been conceived in three pairs which belong together in terms of composition technique, coherence and maturity. The Toccatas in D minor (BWV 913) and D major

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(BWV 912) were probably the first of the series. They feature a profusion of musical invention but are not yet strongly coherent, their fugues being rather fragmentary; they were probably written in Arnstadt or Mühlhausen in 1705-1708. The next pair is formed by the more coherent and mature Toccatas in E minor (BWV 914) and G minor (BWV 915), written in Mühlhausen or Weimar between 1707-1710. The last two Toccatas, in F sharp minor (BWV 910) and C minor (BWV 911), are the strongest in terms of structure and expressive power (particularly in the slow movements); they were composed in Weimar in 1709-1712.

In one of the surviving manuscripts the D minor Toccata (BWV 913) is entitled 'Toccata prima', possibly indicating that it was the first of the series. It begins very much as a toccata, with broken chords, figuration and turbulent passagework, recalling the organ works of Buxtehude so admired by Bach. The connected Adagio, with its melancholic searching in the darkness, forms a strong contrast to this passionate opening. It is followed by a double fugue based on two strongly related subjects. The many cadences produce a fragmentary effect. The fugue is succeeded by a wonderful slow movement in which a continually repeated questioning motif is given a different harmonic colour each time it appears. Finally, a fugue which is more or less a variant of the first one. The Toccata in D major has a similarly flamboyant opening. The furious tremolo figure (literally: shaking) in the fast introduction reappears later. The succeeding Allegro resembles a concerto movement, with solo and ripieno passages and an obstinately repeated hammering motif. It flows into a pensive and expressive recitative, which is interrupted by a chromatic fugal adventure, the beginning and end of which is not clearly marked. The work concludes with a most exuberant and loosely constructed fugue in the rhythm of the English leaping dance, the gigue.

The Toccata in E minor is the smallest of the series. This is clear from the very beginning, where only thirteen bars are required to introduce a four-part fugal section. Not until the succeeding improvisatory Adagio is the real character of a toccata revealed. The composition ends with a chromatic, three-part fugue. The concept of this work is related to that of the Toccata in G minor, though the latter is composed on a considerably larger scale and in five movements. Again, a relatively short improvisatory prologue leads into a four-part fugal section, followed in turn by a musing recitative and a concluding fugue in dotted rhythm – here the subject is heard in inversion, and tension rises high.

In the Toccata in F sharp minor the brilliant opening leads into a slow and chromatic sarabande, preluding ima-



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ginatively on the succeeding fugue. This is indicated ‘Presto e staccato’ and is based on a subject which becomes increasingly submerged under freely modulating interludes; it is followed by an episode in which a continually repeated motif modulates at each repetition. The work concludes with a chromatic, four-part fugue, the subject recalling the Adagio. The Toccata in C minor commences fast and rhapsodically, seeming to explore the entire range of the keyboard on the very first page. A splendid four-part Adagio leads to the nucleus of the work: a very slow fugue on a broken triad subject. The piece ends as it began – rhapsodically.

*Clemens Romijn*



**CD II-19/20**

## KUNST DER FUGE

The Art of the Fugue BWV 1080 is Bach's last major composition. He apparently worked on this enormous task after completion of the Musical Offering. Bach intended to bring the work to the attention of the public by means of a printed edition. He checked some of the engravings, but before their completion and before - as was long suspected - Bach had the opportunity to finish the manuscript, he died. For a long time the Art of the Fugue was seen to be a torso, and neither the manuscript or the edition published after Bach's death by Kirnberger in 1751 could give later generations an accurate idea of the composer's intentions. Many cast doubts, as some continue to do, on the correct sequence of the various movements. There were doubts too concerning the purpose of this work. It is even possible that the title Art of the Fugue does not stem from Bach's hand. Despite such uncertainties concerning sequence and instrumentation, the Art of the Fugue remains one of the most astonishing products of the human mind.

This composition would appear to be a continuation of the Musical Offering, since it consists of a series of contrapuntal variations all based on the same subject and all in the same key. There is even melodic similarity between the two works: the subject of the Art of the Fugue amounts to a sort of summary of the 'royal subject' of the Musical Offering. In most variations Bach omitted any indication as to instrumentation. Musicological research, however, has convincingly established that Bach intended his swan song for a keyboard instrument, most probably the harpsichord. Not until the 1920's was the Art of the Fugue adapted and arranged for all sorts

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of instrumentations, related to the first public performances of the work in the same period. In the past two decades it has likewise been common practice to perform this keyboard work in different instrumentations, sometimes including original instruments.

While in the Musical Offering the emphasis was on canonic forms (the strictest contrapuntal technique), in the Art of the Fugue all the possibilities of fugal composition are investigated. Even the four canons are really designed to demonstrate the possibilities of fugal writing. Despite, or perhaps by reason of, the relative simplicity and unpretentiousness of the short subject of the Art of the Fugue, it is particularly effective as the foundation stone of this monumental structure. The subject is entirely regular and symmetrical. When played in inversion (one imagines a horizontal axis: an upward leap becomes a downward one) the most important intervals (distances between notes) remain almost unaltered. When the subject is combined with its inversion, entirely satisfactory two-part counterpoint results.

As Bach treats his subject in continually changing rhythmic and melodic variations, he gradually develops a complete manual of fugal composition. Each 'contrapunctus', as he calls the individual variations to underline their 'learned' character, offers the definitive solution to a basic problem of fugal composition. The work commences with a group of fugues based on the subject in its original form and in inversion. Contra-fugues and stretto-fugues follow, employing the subject not only in its normal form and in inversion, but also in condensed ('diminution') and enlarged ('augmentation') form: the note values of the subject are shortened or lengthened so that it sounds twice as fast or twice as slow. Bach demonstrates the potential of fugues with two or three subjects, but the magnificent contrapunctus 14 (a triple fugue – with three subjects) which was to form the climax of the work, remained unfinished. Just after the composer had added his signature to the work, like a medieval painter portraying himself in the corner of his painting (the German note names B-A-C-H correspond to our B flat - A - C - B natural), the contrapunctus suddenly stops in bar 239. Later generations were confronted with the difficult though fascinating task of guessing what Bach had in mind. In this respect it is remarkable that the main subject of the Art of the Fugue can be combined with the three subjects of this incomplete fugue. It is therefore rather plausible that this great fugue was indeed conceived, as was claimed in the 18th century, as a fugue with four subjects, a quadruple fugue, to form the monumental key-stone to the Art of the Fugue. The most astonishing (though not the most complicated) contrapunctus in the entire series is the four-part mirror-fugue (contrapunctus 12). Here Bach writes all the parts 'rectus' (in their original form) and

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subsequently ‘inversus’ (in inversion). To make the ‘reflection’ twice as realistic, the soprano of the ‘rectus’ becomes the bass of the ‘inversus’, the alto changes places with the tenor, the tenor with the alto and the bass with the soprano, so that the entire composition is turned upside down.

In the 22 fugues (the number may vary depending on the performance) of the Art of the Fugue Bach not only demonstrated the inexhaustible wealth of contrapuntal composition, but at the same time created a masterpiece in which the individual sections also form one great crescendo of dramatic intensity, one unbreakable chain.

*Clemens Romijn*



**CD II-21/22**

## DIVERSE HARPSICHORD WORKS

These CD's unite the very smallest and the very grandest of Bach's harpsichord works. Although for convenience's sake we leave aside the lengthy Goldberg Variations and the Art of the Fugue, the contrasts remain sufficiently extreme. For the collection of Small Preludes and Fughettas includes a little piece of only eight bars (BWV 931), while the second movement alone of the wonderful Sonata in D minor (BWV 964) amounts to 289 bars, and the four movements together (not counting the repeats in the 3rd and 4th movements) to no less than 408 bars. Strangely enough, the Small Preludes and Fughettas are more familiar to a wide audience than the Sonata. There are probably two reasons for this. Firstly, the Small Preludes and Fughettas form a collection of pieces, like the French and English Suites, the Partitas and the Well-Tempered Clavier, and they do not have the disadvantage of being pieces which are difficult to place, however fine they may be, like the breathtaking Prelude and Fugue in A minor BWV 894. Secondly, there is hardly a beginner on the piano or harpsichord who has not tackled Bach's Small Preludes and Fughettas, which form a pillar of elementary keyboard tuition, as they did in Bach's teaching too.

Bach's two eldest sons Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philipp Emanuel related to their father's first biographer, Johann Nicolaus Forkel, how he approached teaching: 'The first thing he did was to teach his scholars his

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peculiar mode of touching the instrument...he made them practice, for months together, nothing but isolated exercises for all the fingers of both hands, with constant regard to this clear and clean touch...but if he found that anyone, after some months of practice, began to lose patience, he was so obliging as to write little connected pieces, in which those exercises were combined together. Of this kind are the six little Preludes for Beginners.' They were created in the same manner as the *Clavierbüchlein* which Bach wrote in about 1720 for the ten-year-old Wilhelm Friedemann, the only difference being that the latter collection also includes dance-like pieces and works by other composers such as Telemann, Richter and Stölzel. Remarkable in both collections is that Bach not only gradually increased the technical difficulty of the pieces, but also arranged them according to key. The Six Little Preludes for Beginners (BWV 933-943) form a rising sequence through the keys of C major, C minor, D minor, D major, E major and E minor. In the *Inventions* and *Sinfonias* Bach was to extend this sequence to 15 keys, and in the *Well-Tempered Clavier* to all 24 keys of the circle of fifths. Naturally, these collections were also intended to introduce pupils to the most common genres and styles of the period, including the free, more or less improvisatory prelude, the strict fugue, moulded around a single theme and forming a compendium of the rules of counterpoint, and the fashionable, stylised dances of the suite. As we know, all these genres and styles were to be the subject of various separate collections in the course of Bach's life.

Related to the English and French Suites, and probably written in the same period, are the Suite in A minor, BWV 818, a variant of the same suite, BWV 818a, and the Suite in E flat major, BWV 819. They were probably composed in Weimar between 1708-1717. It is uncertain whether the Fantasia in C minor, BWV 919, is really by Bach, since it also survives in a version bearing the name 'di Bernhardt Bach'. The piece would fit perfectly among the two-part *Inventions*.

A most intriguing piece is the Fantasia and Fugue in C minor, BWV 906, written around 1730. The Fantasia, in two repeated halves, is particularly turbulent and refractory. In the unfortunately incomplete fugue Bach employs chromaticism so often and to such extremes that one imagines one is listening to music written in 1910 rather than 1730. Had Bach entered a blind alley? His torch was at any rate not taken up again until Max Reger. We encounter almost the opposite situation in the Fantasia and Fugue in A minor, BWV 944. Here a long and adventurous fugue of almost 200 bars is preceded by a mini-fantasia of just ten bars of broken chords; some manuscripts even omit this modest introduction. Less spectacular and less concerto-like are the Prelude and

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Fughetta in F major, BWV 901, and that in G major, BWV 902. Bach was later to include both fugues in the second part of the Well-Tempered Clavier.

Remarkably, some of the finest musical treasures recorded here on the harpsichord were not originally written for this instrument. The Sonata in D minor BWV 964 is a transcription of the Violin Sonata in A minor BWV 1003, and the Adagio in G major BWV 968 is an arrangement of the first movement of the Violin Sonata in C major BWV 1005. It is even uncertain whether these transcriptions were made by Bach. Scholars believe they stem from the hand of a younger composer, probably one of his pupils, and candidates include Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, Johann Gottfried Mützel (in whose manuscript the Sonata in D minor is transmitted!) and Johann Christoph Altnickol. The Sonata is one of the most substantial and rewarding keyboard works 'by Bach'. Through the transposition down a fifth the entire work has gained a dark coloration. A richly ornamented Adagio leads to an extremely long Fugue of no less than 289 bars, based on a most rudimentary subject. This movement reveals the largest differences in respect to the violin version: where the latter merely suggests polyphony, the harpsichord version boasts completely written-out two- and three-part contrapuntal passages. A sonorous and flowing Andante, comprising two sections in the parallel key of F major, leads 'attacca' to a transparent final movement, capricious, and full of echo effects and alternation of the hands.

Of the spectacular and virtuosic Prelude and Fugue in A minor, BWV 894 (written around 1717), it is known that Bach extended and arranged it (around 1720?) to become the first and third movements of the splendid Triple Concerto in A minor for violin, flute and harpsichord, BWV 1044. The Bach scholar Hans Eppstein, however, has recently suggested that the Prelude and Fugue is itself a transcription of a lost harpsichord concerto, and therefore likewise an intermediate step in a creative process. Both Prelude and Fugue display the strong influence of the Italian concerto. Concerning the date of the Fantasia and Fugue in A minor, BWV 904, opinions differ. According to Schmieder, Bach composed it in Leipzig around 1725. But Klaus Hofmann estimates that it was written in Weimar between 1708-1717. The Fantasia glances back to the 17th century, recalling Frescobaldi in its slowly sliding chords. It is followed by a magnificent double fugue, opening with a rather agile subject which is succeeded by a slowly descending, chromatic subject, only to be followed by a most ingenious combination of the two.

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## INVENTIONEN &amp; SINFONIAS

The circle of pupils which gathered around Bach, probably for the first in the Weimar period (1708-1717), was not only introduced to keyboard playing but also to music theory and composition. Bach worked with short, practical examples which were gradually developed into fully-fledged compositions. The collection of chorale preludes in the Weimar Orgel-Büchlein, though compiled for use in the service, was also intended to demonstrate how such pieces could be written, as the title-page added later by Bach explains: 'Orgel-Büchlein, in which guidance is given to a beginning organist in how to accomplish a chorale in all kinds of ways, and at the same time to become practised in the study of pedalling, since in the chorales found therein the pedal is treated completely obligato. For the highest God alone Honour, For my neighbour, that he may instruct himself from it.'

In the Cöthen years Bach continued to pursue this course, compiling collections with both artistic and pedagogic aims. A fine example is the Clavier-Büchlein for Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, written in 1720 for his eldest son who was then aged ten. Three pages dealing with the tonal system (clefs, keys and voice range), ornamentation and fingering, are followed by short preludes and suchlike pieces, and thereafter by the early versions of what are now known as the Two-part Inventions and the Three-part Sinfonias. Later Bach was to combine these two sets of fifteen pieces in a single volume entitled: 'Sincere instruction wherewith amateurs of the clavier, in particular the ones avid to study, are shown a distinct manner not only (1) to learn how to play cleanly with two voices, but also in the course of further progress (2) to deal correctly and nicely with three obligato parts; at the same time, not only to get good 'inventiones' of their own, but also to develop them well; mostly, however, to achieve a cantabile manner of playing, and along with it to receive a strong foretaste of composition.'

In these thirty contrapuntal pieces Bach demonstrated how an 'inventio', a single, short and clear theme, could be developed into a cohesive entity. The first series comprises fifteen strict two-part pieces with one voice for the right hand and one for the left, serving to demonstrate the importance of good part-writing. The second series comprises fifteen three-part works in which the emphasis lies on the harmonious combination of three voices based on the triads. Bach therefore called them 'sinfonia', from the Greek sym-ponia meaning 'soun-

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ding together'. The volume also provides a basis for technique and fingering. In the first invention, for instance, the opening motif requires constant use of all five fingers of both hands, and a cantabile manner of playing. Moreover, Bach systematically explored the diatonic range of the tonal system within the scope of the fifteen keys customary in the unequal temperaments of the time: those up to four sharps and flats. In unequal temperament each key had its own character, since the octave was not yet subdivided into twelve equal semitones as it is today. In the 'Sincere instruction' Bach arranged the Inventions and Sinfonias according to key, in ascending order.

A report dating from 1790 reveals how Bach used his Inventions and Sinfonias and other works when teaching in Leipzig. It is recorded by Ernst Ludwig Gerber and concerns his father Heinrich Nicolaus Gerber, who was a pupil of Bach at the time: 'Bach accepted him (Gerber senior) with particular kindness because he came from Schwarzburg, and always thereafter called him 'Landsmann'. He promised to give him the instruction he desired and asked at once whether he had industriously played fugues. At the first lesson he set his Inventions before him. When he had studied these through to Bach's satisfaction, there followed a series of suites, then the Well-Tempered Clavier. This latter work Bach played altogether three times through for him with his unmatched art, and my father counted these among his happiest hours, when Bach under the pretext of not feeling in the mood to teach, sat himself at one of his fine instruments and thus turned these hours into minutes.'

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