

ORGAN GIANTS

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

William Fox

Sunday 5th September 2021, 4.30 pm

 St PAUL'S
CATHEDRAL

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

Recital XV

Prelude in A minor

BWV 569

is most likely a result of Bach's time as a young organist in Arnstadt, vividly demonstrating the youthful composer's innate flair for creating substantial music from seemingly minuscule material. A four note falling motif is repeated and transformed throughout the work, before an electrifying stylus phantasticus conclusion.

In dich hab ich gehoffet, Herr

640

Lobt Gott, ihr Christen, allzuleich

732

A chorale prelude from the *Orgelbüchlein*, BWV 640 sees the chorale melody float as a cantus firmus above a contrapuntal texture made dense by rhythmic complexity. This style could perhaps reflect the text "let me never be confounded"; placing the purity of the prayer above the evils of humanity which foment underneath. BWV 732 is an exuberant miniature setting of a Lutheran Christmas carol, a full statement of the hymn interspersed with sprightly improvisatory flourishes.

An Wasserflüssen Babylon

653

The sorrowful hymn is a paraphrase of Psalm 137, recounting the plight of the Israelites in exile from their homeland. Bach composed two versions of this poignant work during his time in Weimar. This setting is a slow sarabande, the embellished chorale melody featuring as a solo line.

Wer nur den lieben Gott läßt walten

690

Wo soll ich fliehen hin

694

Wer nur den lieben Gott läßt walten

691

The text of *Wer nur den lieben* emphasises the importance of trust in God, particularly in times of tribulation. The manuals-only BWV 690 incorporates roaming semiquavers which swirl unpredictably, perhaps alluding to the difficulties against which God is being asked to defend. BWV 691, by contrast, takes the second verse as its inspiration: 'what use are our sighs and laments?' Bach sets the melody as a solo cantus firmus in an introverted, elegiac setting. BWV 694 takes the form of a trio, in which the chorale is presented as a pedal cantus firmus.



This free work, also emanating from Arnstadt, opens with a flamboyant pedal solo, founded on an energetic rising arpeggiated motif, lending an air of confident exuberance. The remainder of the Prelude retains this sparkling character. The Fugue continues much in the same vein, the subject drawing inspiration from the octave leaps utilised throughout in the Prelude.

Notes by Samuel Bristow

William Fox

William Fox is currently the Acting Organist and Assistant Director of Music at St Paul's Cathedral, having been Sub-Organist since July 2018. He works with the world-famous choir of St Paul's, accompanying and directing the music at services, including services of national significance. He also works as part of the ambitious music outreach programme at the Cathedral and gives recitals throughout the UK and abroad. Since September 2019, William has additionally been a junior fellow at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. William was a chorister at York Minster, before holding organ scholarships at Wells and Hereford Cathedrals. Prior to his appointment at St Paul's, he was organ scholar and an academic scholar at Magdalen College, Oxford, from where he graduated with a first class degree in Music. William became a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists as a teenager, winning the Turpin and Durrant prize. He has appeared on BBC radio, BBC television, and Classic FM, and worked through much of Europe and in the USA. His debut recording, of the organ works of Cecilia McDowall, was released in 2021, gaining 5 * reviews in *Choir and Organ* and *The Organ*. As a piano accompanist, he is the winner of the 2018 Sir Anthony Lewis Memorial Prize Competition.

Next recital

Sunday 12th September at 4.30 pm

William Fox | Organ Giants | Complete Bach Recital 16

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