



# ORGAN GIANTS

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

William Fox

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021, 4.30 pm

Live-stream only



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

*Recital V: works for Lent II*

### Fantasia in G minor

**BWV 542a**

The opening of this tumultuous work, akin to a recitative in its unpredictability, embodies the spirit of *stylus phantasticus* through improvisatory flourishes whirling around a sequence of impassioned chords. This volatility is juxtaposed by stricter contrapuntal sections. The piece contains some of Bach's most astonishing harmonic surprises; most notably a cycle of fifths visiting seventeen different keys. By combining these respective characteristics, Bach achieves seismic music of breath-taking theatricality.

### O Mensch, bewein dein Sünde groß

**622**

is an elaborate setting of the Passiontide hymn which Bach sought to include in both the St John and St Matthew Passions. The sins of man are bewailed by a profoundly lyrical soprano line, accompanied by unusually chromatic harmonic progressions. The torturous final bar presents Christ's suffering most explicitly, before finding peace in the final resolution.

### Sonata II in C minor

**526**

Through the trio sonatas, Bach successfully truncated the Italian concerto into an innovative form for a solo performer. The opening *Vivace* is a fiery yet intricate ritornello. A tranquil *Largo* follows. The zestful *Allegro* is a finely crafted-fugue, serving as a jaunty finale to this exquisite sonata.

### Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesus Christ

**639**

The popularity of this *Orgelbüchlein* trio is evidenced by the plethora of transcriptions and homages subsequently offered by eminent figures including Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms and Busoni. A masterwork of simplicity, the chorale melody is scarcely ornamented above gently rolling semiquavers and pulsating pedal notes.

## Fugue in G minor

542b

most likely originated as an improvisation in Hamburg, as Bach had applied for the organist post at the Jacobikirche in 1720. The church's musical advisor was Hamburg's prestigious grandmaster Johann Adam Reincken; Bach, aware of Reincken's Dutch heritage, provided a fugue utilising the melody of the Dutch folk song *Ik ben gegroet van*. While Bach ultimately did not take up the post, the resulting work is one of the composer's most exemplary efforts in the form; a union of intricacy and fervour.

Notes by Samuel Bristow

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## William Fox

William Fox has been the Sub-Organist of St Paul's Cathedral, London, 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. As a piano accompanist, he is the winner of the 2018 Sir Anthony Lewis Memorial Prize Competition.

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## Next recital | Live-stream only

**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> March at 4.30 pm**

Simon Johnson | B-A-C-H Recital II: Late Bach Contrapuntal Symphonies

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