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J.S. BACH

Organ Works Vol. IV

Robert Quinney
organ

Partita on
'Sei gegrüset, Jesu gütig'
BWV 768

Prelude & Fugue in E minor
BWV 548

Concerto in D minor
BWV 596



J.S. BACH

Organ Works Vol. IV

In this fourth volume of organ music by J.S. Bach, I turn for the first time to his transcriptions of concerti by contemporary Italian composers. The assimilation of these works' *ritornello* structure was a turning point in Bach's development, and its centrality to his mature style is demonstrated by the imposing Prelude and Fugue in E minor. As in volumes two and three, the programme is completed by chorale-based pieces: four (plus an unusual variant) from the 'Eighteen', and the remarkable twelve-movement Partita on *Sei gegrüßet, Jesu gütig*.

Robert Quinney

1 Fantasia super *Komm, Heiliger Geist* BWV 651 5.52

2 *Komm, Heiliger Geist* BWV 652 8.24

Concerto in D minor BWV 596 (after Vivaldi) *Arrangement of the Concerto for 2 Violins and Cello in D minor, Op. 3, No. 11, RV 565, by Antonio Vivaldi*

3 [Allegro] 1.08 | 6 Largo e spiccato 2.35

4 Grave 0.29 | 7 [Allegro] 3.07

5 Fuga 3.23

8 *An Wasserflüssen Babylon* BWV 653 5.35

9 *Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele* BWV 654 6.58

Partita on *Sei gegrüßet, Jesu gütig* BWV 768

10 Chorale 1.05 | 16 Variatio VI 1.20

11 Variatio I 2.48 | 17 Variatio VII 1.44

12 Variatio II 1.08 | 18 Variatio VIII 0.59

13 Variatio III 0.41 | 19 Variatio IX 1.10

14 Variatio IV 1.29 | 20 Variatio X 4.46

15 Variatio V 1.04 | 21 Variatio XI 1.40

(Chorale à5 in organo pleno)

22 *An Wasserflüssen Babylon cum doppio pedale* BWV 653b 5.28

Prelude & Fugue in E minor BWV 548

23 Prelude 6.27

24 Fugue 'The Wedge' 8.10

Total running time 77.31

J.S. BACH

While it is likely that Bach would have encountered string music by his Italian contemporaries from an early age, it was only in the 1710s that he truly got to grips with the style. His music never looked back – it is no exaggeration to say that Bach's mature style is unthinkable without this influence. Typically, Bach did not limit his use of *ritornello* to concerto movements, but deployed it across all styles and genres; many apparently modest pieces are on closer inspection a *ritornello* wolf in *galant* sheep's clothing.

Ritornello is especially useful as a means of generating music on a large scale: the return of the opening material, either as a whole or (more often) fragmented, bestows thematic cohesion, while also allowing for a tonal journey to be made away from

Organ Works Volume IV

and back to the tonic, via various related keys. The two large preludes on 'Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herre Gott' that begin the 'Eighteen' chorales are strikingly dissimilar, not least because only one uses *ritornello*. The *Fantasia super 'Komm, Heiliger Geist'*, BWV 651, gives out the chorale in long notes in the pedals, while above, a vigorous *moto perpetuo* of semiquavers presses forward. *Ritornello* allows for the opening material – an upward-thrusting arpeggio – to return in various keys, dictated by the final note of each phrase of the chorale; these appearances are punctuated by episodes, often featuring an expressive 'sighing' accented dissonance in thirds or sixths. By contrast, the second prelude, BWV 652, is firmly rooted in the practice of the generation before Bach: each phrase of the chorale, which is presented in the

soprano with decoration, is preceded by a contrapuntal exposition in the other three voices. Since the chorale is lengthy, and the expositions thoroughgoing in their treatment of the successive phrases, the prelude stretches to 187 bars, to which Bach adds a coda of sudden semiquaver movement – a free realisation of the double *Halleluja* which ends the chorale, and possibly a reference to the equivalent passage in Buxtehude's setting, BuxWV 200.

Bach's assimilation and development of Vivaldian *ritornello* procedures began when, in 1713, Prince Johann Ernst returned to the Ducal Court at Weimar, where Bach had been Organist since 1708. In the course of his studies in Utrecht, the Prince had encountered both the latest string music from Italy – notably Vivaldi's *Lestro armonico* Op. 3 (Amsterdam, 1711) – and possibly the organist

J.J. de Graff, who is known to have performed string concerti on the organ. It is likely that Bach's organ and harpsichord arrangements of several concerti, by Vivaldi and Johann Ernst himself, were made at the Prince's suggestion; Bach's cousin J.G. Walther, with whom the Prince studied, also made a number of keyboard versions of recent Italian music. Vivaldi's *Concerto in D minor*, Op. 3 no 11, is unique among the concerti arranged by Bach in having a tripartite first movement in place of the standard *Allegro*. It comprises a brief, driving dialogue between two violins, playing *spiccato* over a pedal, which opens into a violoncello solo; an even shorter rhetorical paragraph of repeated chords; and a lively fugue, whose subject acts in the manner of a *ritornello*, though the clear *tutti/ritornello* and solo/episode distinction of a textbook Baroque concerto movement is hardly anywhere to be seen. Typically, Bach

increases the contrapuntal density of the fugue in his organ arrangement, and tinkers here and there with the harmony. The middle movement is transcribed faithfully; the simple texture makes possible a clear solo/tutti distinction between two manuals. This is maintained to an extent in the final *Allegro*, though the existence of more than one solo instrument in the original blurs the line somewhat. Apart from the excitement Bach must have experienced at performing this thrilling music, and the sense of new avenues opening up in his own compositional practice, one perhaps also senses his enjoyment of dealing with unfamiliar textures on the organ – of making previously unheard sounds and stretching the instrument to the limits of what it, and the performer, can achieve technically.

The prelude on ‘An Wasserflüssen Babylon’, BWV 653, turns not

toward Italy but to France, setting the chorale *en taille* (in the tenor), a texture familiar to Bach from the *Livre d'orgue* by Nicolas de Grigny (1699) – of which he made a copy around the same time as his Vivaldi transcriptions, or slightly earlier, while composing the first versions of the ‘Eighteen’. The chorale, surely one of the most beautiful and poignant in the repertory, is presented relatively unadorned; indeed, when Bach revised this and all the other ‘Eighteen’ preludes in the 1740s, he tended to prune rather than embellish in all voices (here and in previous volumes, I have recorded the later versions). The revision of BWV 653 does, however, add a remarkable seven-bar coda. Here, Bach makes two surprising manoeuvres, both of which are related to the falling third at the end of the piece’s opening phrase – a motif which recurs throughout in the ‘accompanying’ voices. First, the

final note of the chorale, the tonic G, is harmonised not with a tonic chord, but as the third in E minor. Then, when G major is eventually reached, the solo voice unexpectedly falls stepwise down the octave, coming to rest on the lowest G available; when played, as here, with a *tierce en taille* registration, the tierce rank (1 3/5') sounds a B at the same pitch as the soprano voice, which makes a final reiteration of the falling third motif. Bach thus focusses the listener's attention on the radiant major tonality in which this sorrowful text (a paraphrase of the exile-song Psalm 137) is set, intensifying the prelude's bittersweet *Affekt*. Also recorded on this disc is the variant in five voices, BWV 653b: while the authorship of this version has been questioned, there is also the tantalising possibility that it is connected to Bach's visit to Hamburg in 1720, when he is known to have improvised upon

'An Wasserflüssen Babylon'. This performance was witnessed by Johann Adam Reinken, then 77 years of age, and seems to have been a kind of *hommage* to the venerable Dutch organist. Bach's improvisation exceeded the duration of Reinken's very long setting of the same chorale, of which Bach had made a copy 20 years earlier; it is possible that the younger man demonstrated his virtuosity on the pedals by playing in two or more parts, in the manner of earlier generations of North German organists. Whatever the provenance of BWV 653b, the double pedal adds a sensual richness to the texture, and displaces the *cantus firmus* to the soprano voice. The serene prelude on 'Schmücke dich, O liebe Seele', BWV 654, is one of the best-loved of Bach's chorale-based pieces. The texture is spacious: the pedal moves with an unhurried sarabande tread, and above it a calm dialogue in quavers

introduces and interacts with the decorated *cantus firmus*. As in BWV 653, a recurring motif is created from the opening phrase of the chorale; this reappears just before the final *cantus firmus* phrase – first in the dominant, then in the tonic – lending a sense of homecoming to the end of the piece.

Establishing a chronology for Bach's organ music is fraught with difficulty, partly because he so promiscuously combines styles and genres that it is impossible to ascribe a clear sense of development from one to another – for example, the two preludes on 'Komm, Heiliger Geist', one of which is a great deal more 'modern' than the other, are in fact (as far as we know) contemporaneous. Quite separate from questions of style is the status of the sources that transmit the 'works' to us; in many cases these are sufficiently removed from Bach and his circle to be unreliable as a record

of his intentions, though this lack of clarity is in some ways appropriate for music of the early 18th century – a time when the boundaries between improvisation and composition, performer and composer, and performer and audience were more porous than we assume today. The Partita on 'Sei gegrüßet, Jesu gütig' poses challenges of both transmission and style. In the source closest to Bach (in the hand of J.T. Krebs), only four variations are included; other contemporary sources transmit the remaining movements, but never in a satisfactory order. This rightly provokes questions of what we expect of such a multi-movement piece – that it should describe a cyclic or some other kind of 'organic' shape? In Bach's other surviving chorale partitas, as in most multipartite music by his contemporaries, we look in vain for overall 'form', but in spite of the vicissitudes of its transmission

and the still-disputed order of its movements, BWV 768 does display some of the hallmarks of later variation sets – unsurprisingly, given that the composer’s interest in cycles and symmetry was eventually to find expression in the giant ‘Goldberg’ Variations, BWV 988.

The partita begins conventionally, with a sober four-voice harmonisation of the chorale and a *bicinium* (two-voice) first variation. An *allemande* follows, then three further variations in 4/4 time, in two, four and three voices respectively. At this point one might proceed to the first *pedaliter* variation and maintain metrical consistency, but the order preferred here (as in the *Neue Bach Ausgabe*) keeps the *manualiter* variations together by putting the delicate 12/8 variation sixth in the sequence. The introduction of the pedals brings a new gravity – and to modern ears a sense of development or

accumulation, and this is maintained by the remaining variations. After the slow-moving seventh variation (the only one to put the *cantus firmus* in the bass) comes a giddy and virtuosic movement in 24/16, followed by a trio in 3/4 with the chorale in the middle of the texture. But it is the last two variations that contribute most to the sense of an overall ‘form,’ by lending a very strong teleological sense to the partita: the final variation is a majestic *organo pleno* restatement of the chorale, this time in five voices. Before it, Variation 10 is by far the longest of the set, by virtue not only of its unhurried pace, but also because it states each phrase of the chorale twice: first decorated, then unadorned, one note per bar (and, eventually, in two voices). This remarkable piece is a noble sarabande, like BWV 654, with which it also shares regular crotchet pedal motion and flowing quavers in the vocal inner voices.

Bach's total individuality is even more striking in the Prelude and Fugue in E minor, BWV 548. Like much of Bach's mature music, it runs directly counter to the prevailing musical fashion of the time. Instead of easily-digestible short movements, each in an identifiable style appropriate to the genre, here both movements are on the largest scale imaginable, and do not behave according to generic norms. The Prelude is a tight movement built around a conventional tripartite *ritornello* on the Vivaldian model; the three elements of the opening *ritornello* – *Vordersatz*, *Fortspinnung* and *Epilog* – are capable of being separated, and the reappearance of any of them later in the movement constitutes a new *ritornello*. The bold chords of the opening, from which a solo voice escapes on the second beat of each bar, dissolve into a more contrapuntal texture in the *Fortspinnung*, but as this stage continues the solo/tutti motif of

the *Vordersatz* resumes, with a scalic semiquaver line added, over a cycle-of-fifths bass. Already Bach is blurring lines of demarcation, within a few seconds of the movement beginning, and the blurring continues as the episodes begin their interaction with the *ritornello*. The new motif that appears after the second *ritornello*, in three voices *manualiter*, is the first truly new piece of material to be introduced; but it never lasts more than a few bars before driving forward into a *ritornello* restatement. The Prelude is thus somewhat akin to a *concerto grosso*, its texture capable of many different solo/tutti combinations, but the hierarchy we might imagine to exist between different strata of material is constantly undermined by a sort of thematic cross-fertilisation – or, in other words, the kind of 'organic' unity that made Bach's music so appealing to 19th- and 20th-century critics. The Fugue is, at least at first glance,

rather less coherent than the Prelude. It is a musical Babel, encompassing a widely divergent range of styles, which are held – or forced – together by a *ritornello* structure that is itself contained within a *da capo* (ABA) form. All in all, it is an improbable movement, and one that could only have flowed from Bach's pen – or perhaps from his hands and feet *ex tempore*. The Fugue's intricate structure is no strait-jacket; rather, it engenders a sense of free-flowing invention. Perhaps this is because two of the episodic ingredients (the first, a rhythmically obscure sequence of arpeggiated falling triads; the second, a pedal point with toccata-like offbeat semiquavers in the left hand) are reminiscent of North German *stilus phantasticus* organ music of the late 17th century. The subject itself is remarkable: the falling chromatic fourth known as the *passus duriusculus* is outlined in

quavers that alternate with its mirror image; the initial E thus moves outward to an octave B, hence the common nickname 'Wedge'. The climactic return of the subject after the central excursions is made in the most dramatic fashion possible: over a dominant pedal, the initial E is hidden within a second inversion chord, and the pedal is only resolved to the tonic when the whole subject has been recapitulated; it is only, with the entry of the second voice (the 'Answer') in the same manner as in the exposition, that we register that a full *da capo* is underway. Yet, as in an operatic aria, the 'A' section can never be heard in the same way on its return, even though the notes are identical; after the long and turbulent journey this extraordinary fugue has undertaken everything is the same as before, yet utterly transformed.

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ROBERT QUINNEY is Organist of New College, Oxford. In addition to the daily direction of New College's world-famous choir, his work comprises teaching, lecturing, and examining, as a Tutorial Fellow of the college and an Associate Professor at the University Faculty of Music. He has conducted New College Choir in concert at home and abroad – notably in the Sistine Chapel in Rome, and with The English Concert in New York City and at Wigmore and Cadogan Halls in London. Under his direction the choir continues to make recordings for its own label, *Novum*; the first, a disc of Symphony Anthems by John Blow, was shortlisted for a 2017 Gramophone Award: 'an assured synthesis of elegant musicality, judicious ear for contrapuntal detail and informed scholarship.'

He maintains a parallel career as a solo organist, and is a prolific recording artist: his discs of organ music by J.S. Bach, Elgar, Dupré, Wagner and Brahms (and several CDs with Westminster Abbey Choir and The Sixteen) have been widely acclaimed. In February 2017 he made his debut at the Royal Festival Hall with an all-Bach recital, and later in the same year appeared for the first time at the BBC Proms, playing organ music by Bach and Mendelssohn.

Robert Quinney read music at King's College, Cambridge, where he was Organ Scholar. After four years as Assistant Master of Music at Westminster Cathedral, he became Sub-Organist of Westminster Abbey in 2004. While at the Abbey he performed on concert tours to the United States, Australia and Russia, and at several televised services including the Marriage of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. In April 2013 he moved to Peterborough Cathedral, where he was Director of Music for 16 months. Between 2009 and 2014 he was Director of Oundle for Organists, whose residential courses continue to attract young organists from all over the world.



Photograph © Nick Rutter

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The Organ of Trinity College, Cambridge

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Photograph: Joanna Harries

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 $\frac{2}{3}$ ' 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.

Disposition of the Organ of Trinity College, Cambridge

HAUPTWERK	RÜCKPOSITIV	SCHWELLWERK	PEDAL
1* Principal 16	13* Principal 8	24 Viola 8	36* Principal 16
2* Octave 8	14 Gedackt 8	25 Suavial 8	37 Subbass 16
3 Hohlflöte 8	15 Octave 4	26 Rohrflöte 8	38 Octavbass 8
4* Octave 4	16 Rohrflöte 4	27 Principal 4	39 Bourdon 8
5 Spitzflöte 4	17 Octave 2	28 Gedacktflöte 4	40 Octave 4
6* Quinte 2 2/3	18 Gemshorn 2	29 Nasard 2 2/3	41 Mixtur V
7* Superoctave 2	19 Larigot 1 1/3	30 Doublette 2	42 Posaune 16
8 Sesquialter III	20 Sesquialter II	31 Terz 1 3/5	43 Trompete 8
9 Cornett IV 2I	21 Scharf III	32 Mixtur IV	44 Trompete 4
10 Mixtur IV-V	22 Dulcian 8	33 Fagott 16	
11 Trompete 8	23 Tremulant	34 Trompete 8	
12 Vox Humana		35 Tremulant	(*Father Smith ranks)

45 Rückpositiv/Hauptwerk 46 Schwellwerk/Hauptwerk
47 Hauptwerk/Pedal 48 Rückpositiv/Pedal 49 Schwellwerk/Pedal

RECORDING PRODUCER: Matthew Martin

RECORDING ENGINEER: David Hinitz

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DESIGN: Andrew Giles: discoyd@aegidius.org.uk



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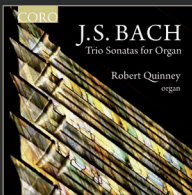
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J.S. Bach Organ Works Vol. I Trio Sonatas for Organ

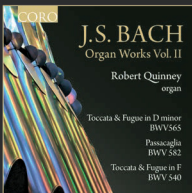


COR16095

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INTERNATIONAL RECORD REVIEW

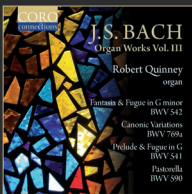


COR16112

J.S. Bach Organ Works Vol. II

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EARLY MUSIC REVIEW

J.S. BACH

Robert Quinney organ

Featuring the mighty Prelude and Fugue in E minor – a work that disregarded all the trends of the time and displays Bach's total individuality – and the unique Organ Concerto in D minor, this fourth volume of organ works from Robert Quinney demonstrates how the *ritornello* structure was central to Bach's mature style. A selection of chorale-based pieces are also explored including the remarkable twelve-movement Partita on 'Sei gegrüset, Jesu gütig'.

"...it's just joyous!"

BBC Radio 3 Record Review
on Organ Works Volume III

Organ Works Vol. IV

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|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Fantasia super <i>Komm, Heiliger Geist</i>
BWV 651 | 5.52 |
| 2 | <i>Komm, Heiliger Geist</i> BWV 652 | 8.24 |
| 3 - 7 | Concerto in D minor BWV 596
(after Vivaldi) | 10.43 |
| 8 | <i>An Wasserflüssen Babylon</i> BWV 653 | 5.35 |
| 9 | <i>Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele</i> BWV 654 | 6.58 |
| 10 - 21 | Partita on <i>Sei gegrüset, Jesu gütig</i>
BWV 768 | 19.54 |
| 22 | <i>An Wasserflüssen Babylon</i>
cum doppio pedale BWV 653b | 5.28 |
| 23 - 24 | Prelude & Fugue in E minor BWV 548 | 14.37 |

Total playing time: 77.31



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