

Notes



Herberger College
of Fine Arts

Bach in Weimar, 1708-1717

Kimberly Marshall, organ

2:30 p.m. – November 7, 2004

School of Music
Herberger College of Fine Arts
Arizona State University

Organ Hall
Music Building

ASU ARIZONA STATE
UNIVERSITY

Program

Tocatta in F Major, BWV 540

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Chorale settings from the *Orgelbüchlein*

Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ, BWV 639

Nun komm' der Heiden Heiland, BWV 599

Wenn wir in höchsten Noten sein, BWV 641

Fugue in G Minor, BWV 578

Concerto in D Minor, BWV 596

[Allegro] Grave; Fuga

Largo e spiccato

[Allegro]

Two "Leipzig" chorales in Weimar versions

Nun komm' der Heiden Heiland, BWV 659a

Fantasia super "Komm heiliger Geist, Herr Gott," BWV 651a

Concerto in G Major

[Allegro]

Grave

Presto

Passacaglia in C Minor, BWV 582

Antonio Vivaldi
(1675-1741)

Johann Ernst
(1696-1715)

Notes

By the grace of God, Wilhelm Ernst, Duke of Saxony, Jülich, Cleves, and Berg, also Engern and Westphalia, etc.

Steadfast, dear and loyal concilor,

Whereas we agreed to appoint our chamber musician and court organist, Johann Sebastian Bach of Mühlhausen, we also decree for his annual salary and allowances, at our pleasure,

One hundred and fifty florins, in cash,

Eighteen bushels of grain [wheat],

Twelve bushels of barley,

Four cords of wood, and

Thirty pails of beer from our castle brewery here, beverage tax-free... June 20, 1708

Thus began Bach's employment as organist at the Weimar court, a position he held for over nine years, during which time he composed most of his music for organ. Today's program explores this fecund period in Bach's life with a varied program that includes some of his most renowned free works, arrangements for organ of orchestral concerti by other composers, and early versions of chorale settings that Bach would later revise.

Tocatta in F Major

The **Tocatta in F Major** is Bach's longest extant organ prelude, with pedal solos and manual virtuosity that clearly reflect his bravura as an organist. It is believed that the piece was composed for the organ in the court chapel of Weissenfels, a nearby Thuringian town where Bach's wife had relatives. This is the only contemporary German organ known to have had a pedal range extending up to the high F that Bach requires in the second solo. The modulating arpeggiated sections are interrupted by pedal points with sharp upbeat chords, creating a sense of great vitality. In three especially dense sections, Bach employs the opening canonic theme of the Tocatta to create contrast before returning to the upbeat chords and arpeggiations. This formal organization, composed of repeated musical material that returns throughout the work (ritornello), is a hallmark of the Italian concerto and a distinguishing feature of Bach's mature Weimar style.

Orgelbüchlein Chorales

The title page to Bach's *Little Organ Book* specifies that its purpose is to guide organists in making chorale settings and to become practised in the study of pedalling. The book contains 46 chorale settings, ordered according to the liturgical year, although Bach wrote in titles for many more chorales that were never composed. A famous anecdote relates that the court organist composed the *Orgelbüchlein* while he was imprisoned by the Duke of Weimar in 1717, but colorful though this be, the manuscript's watermarks and handwriting prove that the majority of the chorales were completed by 1714. The standard setting of this collection presents one stanza of the chorale with the melody in the top voice, accompanied by distinctive figures. This is heard in **Nun komm' der Heiden Heiland** (Savior of the Nations, Come), which opens the book. The descending lines of the accompaniment here represent God coming down to earth in human form, as related by the chorale text. The other two chorales performed today are from the last

section of the *Orgelbüchlein* and are unusual in that they require two manuals. **Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ** (I call to you, Lord Jesus Christ) presents the chorale melody as a solo over a rolling accompaniment, while the tune of **Wenn wir in höchsten Not** (When we are in greatest need), is heavily ornamented, reflecting Bach's expertise at melodic embellishment. (This is heard later in the program in the Weimar version of the Advent chorale *Nun komm' der Heiden Heiland*.)

Fugue in G Minor

This short piece is a textbook example of how to compose a fugue on a minor subject. The sections are clearly delineated and there are none of the learned procedures—stretto, augmentation, or diminution—that characterize Bach's more developed fugues. The chamber-music quality of the writing and the dance-like elegance of the subject have made this one of Bach's most popular fugues.

Concerto in D Minor, BWV 596

Antonio Vivaldi

Bach's study of Italian concerto style first manifests itself in organ transcriptions he made while working at the Weimar court. These include three organ versions of concertos by Vivaldi, including the Concerto in D minor for two violins and cello obbligato, Opus 3, no. 2, published in Amsterdam in 1711. The first movement is noteworthy because it contains rare indications of registration in Bach's hand. The composer specifies that the opening should be played by the two hands on separate manuals using the 4' Octava of each, while the Pedal plays an 8' Principal. Later, an 8' Principal is added to one of the manuals as a 32' Subbass is added to the pedal. These instructions provide clear evidence for the addition of stops during the course of this movement, often requiring the assistance of a registrant (although I shall attempt to make the changes myself at the Fritts organ). The *Grave* provides a chordal introduction to the following fugue. I will ornament between these chordal passages in the top voice, as a first violinist might provide connecting material to serve as an upbeat for the next entry by the entire orchestra. A fugal movement is unusual in a concerto, and in his transcription of Vivaldi's *Fuga* Bach makes no distinction between the tutti and solo groups that are present in Vivaldi's original. Perhaps he felt that the textural changes between statements of the subject and the episodic material provided sufficient contrast. The long sequence of the fugue subject is particularly Italian, and Vivaldi's treatment of this theme in four-part invertible counterpoint gave the transcriber flexibility in distributing the parts so that they would conform to the manual and pedal compasses of the organ. The middle movement is an accompanied solo, introduced by the orchestra with dotted rhythms evoking the *siciliana*. The indication "largo e spiccato" suggests the detached bowstrokes of the strings accompanying the solo violin, imitated on the organ through articulation. The final movement is an exciting display of Italian virtuosity, with quick repeated notes, fast scale passages and rapid manual changes.

"Leipzig" chorales in Weimar versions

The two chorale settings which follow were originally composed in Weimar and later revised by Bach in Leipzig, where they were included in a collection known as the "Leipzig 18." The Advent chorale **Nun komm' der Heiden Heiland** (Savior of the Nations, Come) presents an elaborately ornamented version of the melody. Each line of the chorale is treated imitatively in the accompanying parts before the heavily decorated

melody enters on a solo voice in the right hand. The Pentecost chorale, **Komm heiliger Geist, Herr Gott**, is presented in long notes in the pedals, under swirling arpeggiations that suggest the rushing winds of the Holy Spirit. The Leipzig version of this setting is greatly expanded to over twice the length of this first draft made in Weimar.

Concerto in G Major

Johann Ernst

One of Bach's most important connections at the Weimar court was with Prince Johann Ernst of Sachsen-Weimar, the Duke's younger brother and an avid music lover. From 1711 to 1713, Ernst studied at the University of Utrecht, with trips to Düsseldorf and Amsterdam to widen his knowledge. After his return to Weimar from Holland, he had Italian music sent to him, and he took lessons in composition from J. G. Walther, the organist at Weimar's Stadtkirche. Ernst's appreciation of the Italian style led him to compose orchestral concerti, including the one performed here in an organ transcription by Bach. The piece is characteristic of the Italian concerto, with three contrasting movements which feature alternation between an orchestral ensemble and a violin soloist with continuo. The changes between tutti and solo in the first movement are rendered on the organ by changes between manuals. The slow middle movement also contrasts the sounds of two different manuals. Because of the speed and virtuosity required by the last movement, no manual changes are made; nevertheless the original ritornello structure is clearly heard in the alternation between arpeggiated sections with pedal and the more articulate two-part textures.

Passacaglia

The **Passacaglia** (from "pasar" to walk, and "calle" street) originated in the early 17th century as a refrain for a special type of song in Italy and Spain. During the second quarter of the century, it developed into a variation form built upon a repeated bass line or harmonic pattern, similar to the variations of the *ciaccona*, a courtly dance. Bach's famous **Passacaglia in C minor** is found in a manuscript that may be dated in part to 1707-1708 or even earlier, but it is highly doubtful that he could have composed such a work before coming into contact with the *ritornello* forms of Vivaldi around 1713, so it seems safe to consider this a culminating work of his time in Weimar. The first half of the bass line upon which the Passacaglia is constructed is found in the *Christe* to André Raison's Mass on the Second Tone, although we do not know if Bach consciously adapted it from that source. (The opening fifth and subsequent semitones are characteristic intervals for Passacaglia themes and are also found in Buxtehude's one surviving essay in the genre, which may have served as a model for Bach.) There are twenty-one statements of the Passacaglia, which lead directly to a masterful fugue, whose subject is based upon the first half of the Passacaglia theme. Every entry of the subject is accompanied by two countersubjects, creating a permutation fugue of exhilarating complexity.

The Weimar years were crucial for the development of Bach's compositional style, but he felt increasingly constrained by the narrowness of his duties as court organist and began to look for positions as Capellmeister, where he would be in charge of all court music. His decision to accept such a position at the court of Cöthen led to his arrest by the Duke of Weimar on November 6, 1717. He was imprisoned in the County Judge's place of detention for almost a month, before being "unfavorably discharged" from the Duke's service. On December 29, he took up the position of Capellmeister to Prince Leopold of Anhalt Cöthen, where he would work for over five years, composing orchestral suites, instrumental partitas, the first book of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, and the Brandenburg concerti. Unfortunately for organists, this new chapter of Bach's career closed the door on his music for organ, and it was not until he moved to Leipzig that he returned to writing for the instrument.

-- Kimberly Marshall

Biography

Kimberly Marshall maintains an active career as a concert organist, performing regularly in Europe and the US. She presently holds the Patricia and Leonard Goldman Professorship in Organ at Arizona State University, having previously held teaching positions at the Royal Academy of Music, London, and Stanford University, California. Winner of the St. Albans Competition in 1985, she has been invited to play in prestigious venues and has recorded for Radio-France, the BBC, ABC and numerous American stations.



She has been invited to play throughout Europe, including concerts in London's Royal Festival Hall and Westminster Cathedral, King's College, Cambridge, Chartres Cathedral, Uppsala Cathedral and the Dormition Abbey in Jerusalem. She has also performed on many historical organs, such as the Couperin organ at Saint-Gervais, Paris, the Gothic organ in Sion, Switzerland and the Cahmann organ in Leufstabrik, Sweden. She especially enjoys tailoring programs to the styles of the instruments she plays, as is evident from her recordings of Italian and Spanish music on historical organs. Her playing is informed by research into obscure repertoire and knowledge of performance practice, although she does not limit herself to early music. While at Stanford, she gave performances of organ works by Ligeti in the presence of the composer, and during her time at the Royal Academy of Music she premiered a new work commissioned by Madame Messiaen. She is attracted to the organ by its vast possibilities of timbre and by the instrument's complex development since its invention in the third century BCE. Her work reflects this enthusiasm for musical creativity and historical awareness.

A native of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Dr. Marshall began her organ studies with John Mueller at the North Carolina School of the Arts. Her early interest in French music took her to France where she worked with Louis Robilliard and Xavier Darasse. In 1986, she received the D.Phil. in Music from the University of Oxford. Her thesis, *Iconographical Evidence for the Late-Medieval Organ*, was published by Garland in 1989. More recently, she has developed this work in several articles and lecture/presentations; a CD recording of the earliest surviving keyboard music is in press. She has lectured on her research for the American Musicological Society, the Berkeley Organ Conference, and the Göteborg Organ Art Center in Sweden. In recognition of her work, Dr. Marshall was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to continue her research and teaching during 1991 at the Sydney Conservatorium in Australia. Northeastern University Press published her edition of articles on female traditions of music making, *Rediscovering the Muses*, in 1993, and she contributed entries for the *Grove Dictionary of Music 2000*. Her two anthologies of late-medieval and Renaissance keyboard music were published by Leupold Editions in 2000 and 2004.

Dr. Marshall's compact disc recordings feature works by J. S. Bach and music of the Italian and Spanish Renaissance, French Classical and Romantic periods, and late-medieval Europe. Loft Recordings has re-issued a number of her recordings, including *Divine Euterpe*, works for organ by female composers, and *How Excellent is Thy Name*, Jewish liturgical music for cantor and organ. She was a recitalist and workshop leader during recent National Conventions of the American Guild of Organists (Dallas, 1994; New York, 1996; Denver, 1998; Seattle, 2000; and Los Angeles, 2004). During the summer of 2001, Dr. Marshall appeared in Seoul for the Korean Association of Organists and in Toronto for the Convention of the Royal College of Canadian Organists. Her recording of Chen Yi's organ concerto with the Singapore Symphony was released in 2003 on the BIS label. Her itinerary for 2004 includes appearances playing the famous Fisk organs at Stanford University and House of Hope Presbyterian Church, St. Paul, Minnesota; the newly restored Tannenberg organ in Old Salem, North Carolina; and the new dual-temperament Pasi organ in St. Cecilia's Cathedral, Omaha, Nebraska.

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Second Annual Organ Christmas Concert

December 11

2:30 p.m., 5 p.m., 7:30 p.m.

Organ Hall, Music Building

Last year's event was such a success that this concert will play three times! Kimberly Marshall and the ASU Organ Studio invite you to a special holiday concert celebrating the beautiful music of Christmas.

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