



1995
MICHIGAN

Bach
FESTIVAL

Joh. Seb. Bach



THE THIRTEENTH ANNUAL FESTIVAL

Five Concerts

FEBRUARY 28th ---- JUNE 5th

Curtis J. Posuniak, General Director

Michigan Bach Festival

Sunday, April 2, 1995
Four o'clock in the afternoon

Kirk in the Hills
1340 West Long Lake Road
Bloomfield Hills

PROGRAM NOTES:

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH was the most creative member of a distinguished family of composers, teachers and performers. Bach's genius is especially displayed in the incredible variety of his organ music. It is dramatic, yet personal; rhetorical, yet intimate. It was my good fortune to perform the complete organ works of Bach at The University of Michigan and at The University of Texas in 1965 during the Bach tercentenary celebration. Learning and playing this music proved to be a satisfying, inspiring experience.

The music we hear today is chosen from various periods of Bach's life. During his career Bach was at different times a choir boy, a violinist, a conductor, an organist and a composer. Composition always occupied him; his complete works are contained in forty volumes of the Bach Gesellschaft; of those, only five volumes are devoted to organ music. He began his creative career with compositions for organ, and his last work, dictated on his deathbed, was a chorale prelude for the organ.

____ Fantasia and Fugue in G Minor, BWV 542 ____

The "great" G Minor Fantasia, composed in Kothen in 1720, is in five sections. Bach played this for Reinken in 1720 at the Katharinen-Kirche in Hamburg. The fugue is based on a Dutch dance theme. On hearing Bach's organ music, Goethe is reported to have said, "It is as though the eternal harmony was conversing with itself, as it may have happened in God's bosom shortly before He created the world."

YOUTHFUL WORKS

____ Pedal Exercitium in G Minor, BWV 598 ____

The Pedal Exercise, for pedals alone, is unique. Considerably more than an exercise, it may have been the opening pedal solo of a prelude. Here is music which combines rhetoric and drama with a didactic example of the use of alternate foot pedalling. In measure 7 (an important Biblical number), 8, and 9 (which is 3 plus 3 plus 3) the composer introduces a motif which eventually will serve as the main theme of the famous D Minor Fugue, BWV 565.

____ In Dulci Jubilo, BWV 751 ____

Good Christian Men Rejoice is essentially a two-voiced work. The melody is played on a reed register with accompaniment on Flutes. The Third voice sounds a pedal point, a note held under the other moving voices.

Program

MARILYN MASON

University Organist, University of Michigan

Music of J. S. Bach (1685-1750)

Fantasia and Fugue in G minor, B.W.V. 542

Early Works:

Pedal Exercitium in G minor, B.W.V. 598

In Dulci Jubilo, B.W.V. 751

Rejoice Christians, B.W.V. 734

Toccat, Adagio and Fugus in C, B.W.V. 564

Partita, "O Gott, du frommer Gott," B.W.V. 767

Toccat and Fugue in D minor, B.W.V. 565

PROGRAM NOTES, Continued:

____ Nun Freut euch, liebe Christen g'mein, BWV 734 ____

Rejoice, Beloved Christians is a three-voiced work. The melody is played by the pedal on a Trumpet register. The right hand accompanies with bright sounds incorporating upper harmonics, and the left hand plays the basso continuo.

In May, 1987, I made a concert tour in the former DDR or "East Germany" as it was then called. One of the special moments during the tour was my visit to Arnstadt. I had been invited to play at the Bachkirche where Bach held his first church position as organist/choirmaster. In this organ there remain seven ranks or "colors" of sounds which Bach knew and used. It was a moving experience to use sounds that Bach would have heard. For several hours I played only those individual registers. The organ console controls approximately 50 stops. The seven known registers which Bach used are each marked with a tiny "B". Each of the individual registers is beautiful, and one can enjoy each sound alone. There are also innumerable possibilities for combining the seven different sounds.

BACH IN WEIMAR (1708-1717)

____ Toccat, Adagio and Fugue, BWV 564 ____

This work is unique among Bach's 28 larger preludes and fugues for the organ. Bach gave it a special place in his canon because of its multi-movement shape. Each of the three movements could stand alone. In its present form the Toccat, with its quasi-Italian influence of question-answer dialogue and the rousing Fugue form pillars framing the quiet, meditative Adagio.

It was the English historian Terry who wrote about Bach: "His Weimar period revealed him as an organist of unrivalled technique, a composer for his instrument of the most inventive genius, an architect of contrapuntal form whose like had not and has not appeared."

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

MARILYN MASON is University Organist and Chairman of the Organ Department of The University of Michigan. Her extensive career as concert organist, lecturer, adjudicator and teacher has carried her throughout the musical world. She was the first woman to play in Westminster Abbey, the first woman organist to play in Latin America, and the first American to play in Egypt. During a single year invitations took her to five continents. Dr. Mason has served as judge at nearly every major organ competition in the world. Marilyn's dedication to contemporary music is evidenced in the sixty works which she has commissioned and premiered. Currently, she is pursuing her commitment to stylistic integrity through research into the construction and tonal design of historic organs in Europe.

In 1987 Dr. Mason was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Music degree by the University of Nebraska, where she served as consultant for the new Casavant Limited mechanical action organ. She was honored as the "1988 Performer of the Year" by the New York Chapter of the American Guild of Organists.

Dr. Mason's discography includes music of Bach, Pachelbel, Handel, Mondonville, and contemporary composers on Columbia and Musical Heritage Society labels. She is now recording the complete organ music of Pachelbel for The Musical Heritage Society.

PROGRAM NOTES, Continued

AN EARLY WORK

____ Partita, "O Gott, du frommer Gott", BWV 767 ____

It is suggested that the several partitas may have been written during Bach's Luneburg years. The young composer is experimenting with the various compositional techniques required to "vary" a melody. Here the chorale, "O God, Thou Faithful God" is followed by eight variations.

____ Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, BWV 565 ____

The great "Toccata in D Minor" concludes the concert. This is music of grand dimension and rhetoric. The genius of the composer is displayed with every gesture. His craftsmanship is reflected in his differentiation of ideas and motifs and his secure control of musical materials. Even the notes of the Fugue subject are found in the opening grand gesture of the Toccata

We may praise this music in the Latin inscription with which Bach signed many of his compositions:

"Soli Deo Gloria." ("To God Alone the Glory.")

Notes by Marilyn Mason
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