


David Hamilton plays J. S. Bach



at the organ of Canongate Kirk

Organ music of Johann Sebastian Bach



1	Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme, BWV 645	3.49
2	Passacaglia in C minor, BWV 582	13.19
3	Erbar dich mein, o Herre Gott, BWV 721	4.36
4	Pièce d'Orgue, BWV 572	9.02
5	O Mensch, beweine deine Sünde groß, BWV 622	5.15
Toccata in C major, BWV 564		17.41
6	<i>Toccata</i>	5.35
7	<i>Adagio</i>	4.05
8	<i>Fugue</i>	8.01
9	Dies sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot', BWV 678	5.41
Prelude and Fugue in E flat major, BWV 552		15.19
10	<i>Prelude</i>	8.33
11	<i>Fugue</i>	6.46
Total CD duration		75.39

**played by David Hamilton
at the organ of Canongate Kirk, Edinburgh**

Johann Sebastian Bach was born in Eisenach on 21 March 1685 and died in Leipzig on 28 July 1750. By many he is acknowledged as the greatest composer ever to have lived, yet in his own day he owed his fame primarily to his ability as a performer. When he was appointed to his final post – Kantor of Leipzig's Thomaskirche – he was third choice candidate: 'as the best men could not be got, they must make do with the mediocre' in the words of one Councillor Platz. Bach was a multifaceted musician, at various times composing, conducting, teaching and performing. He was prolific in many genres (except opera) and most celebrated as an organist. He was also highly knowledgeable about the workings of the organ and was often engaged as an expert to advise when instruments were rebuilt.

As a performer, Bach's technique (particularly his pedalling) inspired superlatives in his contemporaries: one commentator declared he could perform passages with his feet better than most others could with their hands. It is perhaps significant that Bach specifies the use of the pedal in so many of his organ compositions when contemporary practice was generally vague, contributing to a blurring of distinction between harpsichord and organ repertoires and compositional styles.

As with many other German composers in the baroque period, Bach's organ works (over two hundred of which have survived) may be clearly divided into those which either use a chorale or do not. His chorale-based works range from concise settings partly intended as teaching material to extended variation sets; his chorale-free output includes many Prelude and Fugue pairs, the cornerstones of most organists' repertoires. In choosing the works for this recording, I have tried to include pieces which give as representative a range as possible on a single disc. Edinburgh's Canongate Kirk possesses a superbly colourful organ and warm acoustic, both of which proved ideal for the project.



Wachet auf (BWV 645) is one of the six ‘Schübler Chorales’ and is a transcription of a movement from Bach’s Advent Cantata (BWV 140) of the same name. The tenor solo of the original is given to the left hand, here utilising the organ’s pungent Trompet stop, while the pedal and right hand take the lively bass and upper string lines respectively.

The *Passacaglia* (BWV 582) is a sublime example of ground bass – where a single theme is repeated and variations composed above it. The first half of Bach’s eight bar theme is the same as one used in a *Trio en Passacaille* published in 1688 by André Raison, a piece which Bach may well have known. But here the similarities end. Raison retains the theme in the bass throughout; Bach transforms the theme by placing it variously at the top and middle of the texture (as well as its customary bass location). Raison’s Trio comprises a short introduction and six variations; Bach follows the opening statement (solo in the pedals) with twenty variations – with and without pedals. And, for good measure, he joins a substantial fugue to the end of the last variation, using half of the initial theme. Paradoxically, this liberates the music from the home key of C minor, while achieving an overall effect which is extraordinarily integrated.

The penitential nature of *Erbarm dich mein* – based on Psalm 51 – is beautifully captured in this setting (BWV 721), not least in the chromatic harmony used. The repeated chords and their texture suggest string writing; interestingly, the use of pedals is not specified and a *manualiter* treatment enhances the delicate character of the piece.

Like many of his contemporaries, Bach knew music from beyond his immediate geographical area. This is confirmed in his *Pièce d’Orgue* (BWV 572), the three sections of which are headed *Très vite*ment, *grave*ment and *Lente*ment. On one level, the simplest of motives – a scale – is at work in all three parts, unifying the structure. The first and third sections are similar with the hands playing a continuous single line of music. In between, in the *grave*ment, Bach writes what

The Music 3

resembles a French baroque *Grand plein jeu* – reeds in the pedal part with a principal plenum for the manuals. The music here seems to invite French ornamentation and, at times, the application of *notes inégales* (where evenly notated quavers are performed with a subtle lilt).

O Mensch, beweine (BWV 622) is one of forty-six short chorale settings making up Bach's *Orgelbüchlein*. The music is very slow and often very chromatic, and the melody is treated in a highly florid manner. These extremes in compositional approach reflect the chorale's Passiontide text.

The *Toccata* (BWV 564) harks back to an earlier style of writing where a single title could connote a multi-sectioned work. Here, the opening manual flourish is followed by a similar passage for the pedals before hands and feet are combined. The ensuing *Adagio* perhaps resembles the slow movement of a solo violin concerto, with a simple accompaniment supporting the treble part's coloratura line. This is also a texture familiar to us from several of Bach's slower chorale settings. Next, a short *Grave* which is very much in the Italian *durezza e ligature* (dissonances and suspensions) style. Then comes a buoyant fugue, the subject of which includes three conspicuous rests and is ideally suited to the Canongate's acoustic. At the end, I have repeated some of the opening *Toccata* music, forming a *da Capo*.

Bach's monumental *Clavierübung III* appeared in 1739 and was his first publication of organ music. The bulk of the work consists of twenty-one chorale settings of which *Dies sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot* ('These are the holy Ten Commandments') (BWV 678) is one. The chorale melody appears in the left hand in canon (here on the Obo stop) with two further voices in the right hand and a steady pedal line. The overall complexity of the piece contrasts with the directness of the tune as it appears in long notes.

Much has been made of the Trinitarian symbolism of *Clavierübung III* and the *Prelude and Fugue* (BWV 552) which frame the work. The collection totals twenty-seven pieces (3x3x3); three main themes are at work in the Prelude, just as the Fugue has three sections in different metres; the key (E^b major) has three flats in its signature. Whether these allusions were intended to speak directly to the listeners of Bach's (or indeed any) time is uncertain; what is beyond doubt is the composer's profound power of expression, his command of rhetorical *affekt*, and his mastery of invention, all of which make this one of his most popular works for the organ.

Notes © 2010 David Hamilton

This recording was made at Canongate Kirk, Edinburgh on 16-18 February 2010.

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The Performer



David Hamilton studied with Stuart Campbell at Glasgow University, Harald Vogel at the North-German Organ Academy and Jos van der Kooy at Zwolle Conservatory in the Netherlands. He was a prizewinner at Royal College of Organists' exams and at the European Organ Improvisation competition.

He teaches at the RSAMD and at the Music School of Douglas Academy and is Director of Music at St Mary's Episcopal Church, Hamilton. He has performed throughout Western Europe and in Lithuania, the Czech Republic, North America and Russia.

In 2007 he recorded a CD of Buxtehude's organ works in King's College, Aberdeen on the Divine Art label.

In addition he undertook two cycles of Buxtehude's complete organ works, one in the west of Scotland and one at the Edinburgh Fringe. As Organist of Strathclyde University, he has responsibility for the new Bach-style organ, built by Orgelbau Kögler.

The Organ

CANONGATE KIRK THE KIRK OF HOLYROODHOUSE

The present church building was completed in 1690 and sits on Edinburgh's Royal Mile. Both the Palace of Holyroodhouse and Edinburgh Castle lie within the Parish of Canongate, as does the Scottish Parliament. Canongate Kirk is also recognised as the Military Church in Scotland's Capital City. Considerable changes to the interior were carried out after World War II when two major 19th century additions to the church were removed: the wall which blocked off the nave from the apse; and the side galleries. At the same time, new furnishings were presented: particularly the stalls in the apse, the Royal Pew, the Governor's Pew and the Choir Stalls. The organ was designed and built by Th. Frobenius of Copenhagen, Denmark and is situated in the gallery over the entrance. It is a memorial to The Very Reverend Ronald Selby Wright CVO, TD, DD, FRSE, who was Minister at Canongate from 1937 to 1977, and was dedicated on Sunday 15 November 1998.

The Organ

Frobenius (opus 1000)

Great (C-g''')

Principal 8'

Rohrflute 8'

Octave 4'

Gedecktflute 4'

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

Octave 2'

Mixtur IV

Trompet 8'

Positiv (C-g''')

Fugara 8'

Gedeckt 8'

Celeste 8'

Waldflute 4'

Flute 2'

Quint 1 $\frac{1}{3}$ '

Sesquialtera II

Obo 8'

Tremulant

Pedal (C-f')

Subbas 16'

Principal 8'

Hohlflute 8'

Basun 16'

Couplers

Gt + Pos

Ped + Gt

Ped + Pos



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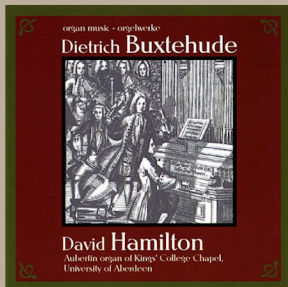
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Also by David Hamilton:



Buxtehude organ music

Praeludia in C major, F sharp minor and G minor
Ciacona in C minor | Fuga in C major
Magnificat primi toni | Wie schön leuchtet
6 Chorale Preludes

Performed on the Aubertin organ of
Kings' College Chapel, The University of Aberdeen

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