

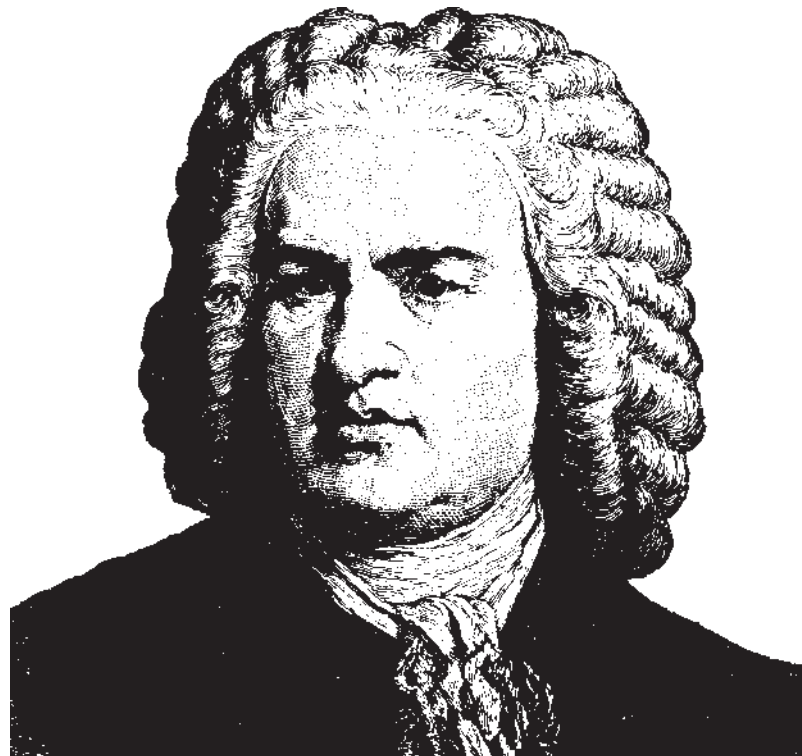
runs through neighboring tonalities, and ends with a restatement in invertible counterpoint.

Passacaglia in C-minor (BWV 582)

The opening 4 bars of the Passacaglia theme, and the entire fugue subject are identical to a Mass movement entitled *Trio en pascaille* by the French composer Raison. In another work by the same composer, the second half of the passacaglia subject appears in a *Trio en Chaconne*. Whether Bach was aware of these pieces is the subject of much conjecture as he greatly admired the French school. In any case this monumental work divides itself into a theme with twenty variations. While none of the accompanying figures are truly unique, it is Bach's treatment and development which give the work its incredible energy and majesty. Besides the first four bars of the passacaglia theme, the fugue also utilizes two countersubjects. The three lines are continually combined in different and varied ways, such that no permutation of themes and voices appears twice. Even the interludes and episodes are based on countersubject material.

Program notes by Michael Dulac

Bach @ 250



Michael Dulac, organist

Sunday, 17 September 2000, 4:00pm

First Congregational Church

18 Broad St., On the Green, Westfield, Mass.

SPONSORED BY

The Springfield Chapter, American Guild of Organists

PROGRAM

Concerto in D-minor (BWV 596)

Vivaldi/Bach

- I. Allegro
- II. Grave – Fuga
- III. Largo e spiccato
- IV. Allegro

For many years, the transcription of the Vivaldi concerto in d for two violins and cello obbligato, Op. III, #11, was thought to be by W.F. Bach. The manuscript containing the work was later discovered to be an autograph and has been dated to around 1714-1717. It is one of the few works of Bach which contain registrations and/or manual indications.

The first movement is Bach's unique realization of a duet for two violins and cello, followed by a duo for cello and continuo. Several large plenum chords separate the opening from the following fugue. The fugal movement is unusual for a Vivaldi concerto, in it he writes in four-part invertible counterpoint in which any line may become the bass line. Bach takes a practical approach to the transcription of the bass line by making it quite a bit easier than the original bass which combines solo cello and basso continuo. Also noteworthy is the absence of any solo lines. The Largo, which is in the form of a Sicilienne, is treated like the Adagio of the Toccata, Adagio, and Fugue (BWV 564): a chordal accompaniment and simple bass, with the melody on a solo stop. A final Allegro in Ritornello style brings the concerto to a close. While one would expect all the solo episodes to be on the smaller organ sound, that is not the case. It is also interesting to note which string idioms Bach retains and which he modifies.

From the Leipzig Eighteen

Known as "The Leipzig Eighteen," these chorales probably originated during the Weimar period, between 1710 and 1714. They were revised and assembled by Bach in Leipzig and serve as an example of his methods of revising and collecting older material. The set as we know it is probably not the final form Bach wished it to have. Poor health could have prevented him from completing it.

Von Gott will ich nicht lassen (BWV 658)

The melody is probably from a German secular song, but also resembles other tunes which are associated with Christmas. Helmbold's text to the hymn was published in 1563 and usually associated with the Third Sunday in Advent and Third Sunday After Epiphany. The chorale melody is heard in the pedals and there is a prominent countersubject whose rhythm is often associated with joy or wakening.

Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr' (BWV 662)

Decius wrote the text which is an adaptation of the Gloria in excelsis deo. It was associated especially with Easter or Christmas, but was sung in Leipzig every Sunday. The melody is an adaptation of the plainsong Gloria of

Mass I with a repetition of the opening two lines. A florid soprano line based on the chorale is heard above imitative and melodious manual parts which are derived from the opening of the tune.

Jesus Christus, unser Heiland (BWV 665)

The text is based on Luther's translation of a 14th century hymn, which was a doctrinal hymn before Communion. Perhaps of late Gregorian origin, the melody bears a resemblance to the Creed hymn, Wir Glauben. Each line of the chorale is given its own section with the melody stated both in soprano and bass parts. Each line of the chorale melody also appears with a countersubject which Schweitzer felt commented on words found in the hymn text. Especially promising are the chromaticism of the third line (bitter suffering) and the fourth line's rising thirty-second notes (resurrection). A pedal point with extended coda concludes the setting.

Prelude and Fugue in A-minor (BWV 543)

This piece was probably reworked by Bach several times between 1709 and 1725. The prelude has many similarities to the works of the North German school, but with Bach's undeniable stamp. The prelude gives the impression of building steam in the beginning by Bach's use first of sixteenths, then sixteenth-note triplets, and finally thirty-second notes over a pedal point, before the original theme finally emerges once again in the pedals. Many strange rhythmic shiftings running over the barlines give the impression of irregular meters in both the prelude and fugue. Probably written later than the prelude, the gigue theme of the fugue, and the elegance of the writing suggest the end of the Cöthen period or the beginning of the Leipzig. The fugue ends with what seems like an improvised cadenza.

INTERMISSION

Trio Sonata #4 in E-minor (BWV 528)

- I. Adagio – Vivace
- II. Andante
- III. Un poc' allegro

The six trio sonatas were sketched between 1723-1727 and were intended as pedagogical pieces, probably for Bach's eldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann. While there are no direct models for the sonatas, the texture is certainly familiar to Bach from the organ chorales, and also from the French school with their trios, trios en dialogue, etc.

Movement I of the fourth trio sonata is a transcription of the Sinfonia to Cantata #76, originally scored for oboe d'amore, viola da gamba and continuo. All three lines are extremely melodious and have great potential for generating motives. The figures of both the subject and countersubject can be seen arising from the unique qualities of the gamba. Movement II is one of the most original and beautiful of the sonatas. Two ideas to keep track of: upward leaps of a fourth with countersubject, and ascending theme with colorful rhythms. The final movement is a fugue which