

BACH 708 - BACH on Silbermann Organs Vol 1: FREIBERG Cathedral

That Bach's Organ Works should be performed on the Organs of Gottfried Silbermann could hardly be more appropriate. Bach became known throughout the wider region not only as an organist and improviser, but also as a technician well-versed in the arts of organ building, and as such he was frequently commissioned to test newly built organs before their official "handing-over" by the builder. Yet he never *officially* tested an organ by Silbermann. Why? Of similar age and living in the same area, the two were firm friends and frequent colleagues.

Bach and Silbermann shared an interest and advanced knowledge of acoustics as applied to the voicing and location of organs. They would also work together in their latter years on the escapement mechanism for the first *Fortepianos* -Silbermann was to make several for Frederick the Great, and it was in trying out one of these in the Palace of Sans Souci, Potsdam, that Bach elaborated on the King's theme for the Musical Offering. Just as Bach became Honorary Court Composer at Dresden, so likewise did Gottfried Silbermann receive the title of Honorary Court and State Organ Builder to the King of Poland and Duke of Saxony at Dresden. On a personal level we may be certain that Silbermann was a frequent visitor at the Bach home in Leipzig – he was godfather to Carl Philipp Emmanuel who held him in high regard.

Silbermann was based in Freiberg, Saxony, where he had his workshop. His mainly small village instruments were built to a fairly standard model thus saving tooling costs, which were passed on in the form of highest quality materials and workmanship. Perhaps the single most important feature of Gottfried Silbermann's instruments is their distinctive sounds. From the silvery flutes to the strong and reedy 16' Posaune in the pedal, Silbermann's sounds were unique, and indeed were constantly praised by organists in their testimonies of his instruments. Frequent reference is made to a play on his name, as organists praised his "*Silberklang*" or "*Silvery Sounds*". Mozart commented: "*These instruments are magnificent beyond measure*".

Today Gottfried Silbermann has the unique distinction of having a museum dedicated to his work, located in the picturesque town of Frauenstein close to Gottfried's birthplace and to Freiberg. With his 31 extant instruments gathered relatively closely together within or very close to the Saxon borders, Silbermann minimized the transportation costs for his materials. For the organ-lover today, this close proximity of so many single-builder historic instruments of such fine quality makes a Gottfried Silbermann Organ Tour imperative and richly rewarding.

The **TOCCATA & FUGUE in d minor BWV 565**, an early work dating from Weimar 1709 or Arnstadt, is of a strongly rhapsodic character: this applies not only to the *Toccata* sections at the beginning and end but also to the freely flowing *Fugue* in the center which lacks the customary firm construction but uses runs and broken chords to separate the different entrances of the theme.

The **FANTASIE in C Major BWV 570** is also an early work When Bach was only nine years old both his parents died, and the young Johann Sebastian was taken into the Ohrdruf household of his elder brother who was an excellent teacher. Here Bach copied and studied the works of other composers, and began his own compositions of which this work is probably one.

The **Four CHORALE VARIATIONS BWV 734-737**, played by Hans Otto on the Small Organ in Freiberg Cathedral, were found in Bach's "Componierstube" - his Composing Study - after his death. Perhaps he planned to make a further unified Chorale Collection.

Dr. Eger made notes documenting his registrations on the MAIN Cathedral Organ which we give below:

PRELUDE & FUGUE in C Major, BWV 545. The Prelude dates from Leipzig about 1730, the Fugue much earlier, probably early Weimar years. Both Prelude and Fugue can so easily sound slight works; this powerful organ and the stately, measured performance of Dr Eger bring out their full stature. The Prelude is played with Plenum Chorus. The Fugue begins with the small plenum registration (Prinzival 8', Oktave 4' & 2'), to which are later added the Mixtures and Zimbels, and finally the reeds (Posaune, Trompete, Clarine).

The **TRIO in G Major, BWV 586** is an adaptation for organ of a work by Telemann. The *right hand* plays on the Oberwerk with Gedackt 8', Spitzflöte 4', and Flageolett 1'. The *left* plays on the Brustwerk with Gedackt 8', Rohrflöte 4' and Nasat 2'. In the *Pedal*: Subbass 16' and Oktavbass 8'.

The Six Schübler **CHORALE PRELUDES, BWV 645-650**

This set of 6 Chorale Variations takes its name from their publisher. The set appeared in 1746, when Bach was 61; they represent Bach's transcriptions of his favorite Cantata movements.

BWV 645 *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme - Sleepers wake, the voice is calling* from Cantata 140 of the same name, *fourth movement*. The tenor Chorale is here played with the *left hand* on the Hauptwerk with Trompete 8' and Clarine 4'. The upper voice is played with the *right hand*, alternating between the Oberwerk (with Quintadena 8', Spitzflöte 4', Flageolett 1' & Zimbel) and Brustwerk (with Gedackt 8' and Siffelöte 1'). *Pedal*: Subbass 16' & Oktavbass 8'.

BWV 646 *Wo soll ich fliehen hin - O whither shall I flee* from a lost Cantata. The alto Chorale melody is played with the *Pedal*, registered with Oktavbass 4'. *Right hand* plays on the Brustwerk with Gedackt 8' & Siffelöte 1'. *Left hand* on the Oberwerk with Quintade 16' and Spitzflöte 4'.

BWV 647 *Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten - If thou but suffer God to guide thee* from Cantata 93 of the same name, *Fourth movement*. The Chorale is played here in the *Pedal* with Clarine 4'. The *left hand* plays the continuo part in the Hauptwerk with Bordun 16', Rohrflöte 8' & Oktave 4'. The *right hand* plays the upper voice on the Brustwerk with Gedackt 8', Prinzipal 4' & Mixtur.

BWV 648 *Meine Seele erhebt den Herrn - My soul doth magnify the Lord* from Cantata 10, *Fifth movement*, where the Chorale by the trumpet is accompanied by a duo between the alto and tenor with continuo. The Chorale is played here on the Hauptwerk (*right hand*) with the five-rank Cornett. *Left h*: Oberwerk with Prinzipal 8' & Oktave 4'. *Pedal*: Subbass 16' & Oktavbass 8'.

BWV 649 *Ach, bleib bei uns, Herr Jesu Christ - Lord Jesus, abide with us: Third movement* of Cantata 6; chorale sung by the sopranos, with accompaniment by violoncello piccolo & continuo. Here, the Chorale is played on the Oberwerk with Vox Humana 8' & Spitzflöte 4' with tremulant. *Left hand*: Brustwerk with Gedackt 8' & Prinzipal 4'. *Pedal*: Subbass 16' & Oktavbass 8'.

BWV 650 *Kommst du nun, Jesu, vom Himmel hernieder? - Comest thou now, Jesu, from Heaven to Earth?* from Cantata 137, *Lobe den Herrn, Second movement*. The Chorale melody is played in the *Pedal*, registered with Clarine 4', and Oktave 4'. The *left hand* takes the continuo function in the Hauptwerk with Bordun 16', Spitzgamba 8', and Oktave 4'. The glittering upper voice (*right hand*) is played on the Brustwerk with Gedackt 8', Nasat 2 2/3', Terz 1 3/5', and Siffelöte 1'.

TRIO in d minor, BWV 583 Probably written in Köthen, or in Bach's early Leipzig years. The upper voice is played with the *right hand* on the Oberwerk registered with Gedackt 8', Spitzflöte 4' and Flageolett 1'. The middle line is played with the *left hand* on the Brustwerk with Gedackt 8', Rohrflöte 4' and Nasat 2 2/3'. *Pedal*: Subbass 16' and Oktavbass 8'.

PRELUDE & FUGUE in g minor, BWV 535 This very introspective work from Bach's early Arnstadt years begins with a toccata-recitative passage reminiscent of Buxtehude. It is registered with the small plenum, later adding the 8' and 1', then the Terz 1 3/5', then Quint 1 1/3'. The solo passage is played with the Oktave 4'. At the end of the Prelude, registration as for the beginning. **The Fugue**, in brighter mood, opens with the Principals 8', 4' and 2', and in the *Pedal* with 16', 8' and 4', increasing successively to full chorus and reeds. In the toccata passage at the end of the Fugue, the full

majesty of the Silbermann reeds can be heard with splendid effect.

Freiberg Cathedral Organ by Gottfried Silbermann (1683-1753).

The Organ was built between 1710 and 1714 as Gottfried's second "solo" instrument following his establishment of his organ-building workshop in Freiberg, the first being for the village church of Frauenstein which was later destroyed by fire. The specification and design of the instrument were largely influenced by the then Cathedral Organist Elias Lindner, a pupil of Kuhnau, also a lawyer and a mathematician. The design reflects the internal structure: each section – HW, OW and BW are kept visually separate. The casework was also Lindner's design, and was to influence all of Gottfried Silbermann's subsequent organ cases

Hauptwerk II

C, D - c'''

Bordun 16'

Principal 8'

Rohrflöte 8'

Viol di Gamba 8'

Octava 4'

Quinta 3'

Superoctav 2'

Tertia (1+3/5')

Mixtur 4 ranks

Cimbeln 3 ranks

Cornet c' 5 ranks Trompet 8'

Clarin 4'

Oberwerk III

C, D - c'''

Quintadehn 16'

Principal 8'

Gedackt 8'

Quintadehn 8'

Octava 4'

Spitzflöte 4'

Superoctav 2'

Flaschflöt 1'

Mixtur 3ranks Cimbeln ranks

Echo c' 5 ranks

Krumbhorn 8'

Brustwerk I

C, D - c''

Gedackt 8'

Principal 4'

Rohrflöte 4'

Nassat 3'

Octava 2'

Tertia 1+3/5'

Quinta 1+1/2'

Sufflöt 1'

Mixtur 3 ranks

Couplers (slider)

OW/HW

BW/HW

Pedal

C, D - c'

Untersatz 32'

Principalbaß 16'
Subbaß 16'
Octavbaß 8'
Octavbaß 4'
Pedalmixtur 6 ranks
Posaunenbaß 16'
Trompetenbaß 8'
Clarinbaß 4'

Tremulant & Schwebung

The Small Organ in Freiberg Cathedral is a one-manual instrument originally built for the Johannis Kirche and moved to the Cathedral in 1939. Thus although built by Silbermann (1719) it was not voiced by him specifically for its present location in a side gallery. *The specification:*

On the MANUAL: Principal 8', Gedackt 8', Octava 4', Rohrflöte 4', Nasat 3', Octava 2',
Quinta 1½', Sifflöte 1', Cimbäl 2 ranks, Mixtur 3 ranks, Cornet 3 ranks.

PEDAL: Subbass 16', Posaunenbass 16', Trompetenbass 8'. Tremulant, & Manual-Pedal Coupler

Visit the Gottfried Silbermann website at www.BaroqueMusic.org/silbeng.html