

Celebrating the Musical Genius of Johann Sebastian Bach

The Program

Fantasia and Fugue in G Minor, BWV 542

In 1720, Bach applied for the post of music director at St Jacob's Church in Hamburg. As part of the audition, Bach performed an organ recital lasting more than two hours. In the end, establishment politics prevented Bach from winning the job, but the level of his playing left the audience stunned. After hearing Bach's improvisations, the 97-year-old Dutch organist, Johann Adam Reinken, said, "I thought this skill had died out, but I see it lives on in you."

It's believed that one of the works Bach performed on this occasion was the mighty Fantasia and Fugue in G minor, BWV 542. This is surely some of the most haunting and tempestuous music in all of Bach's output. The stern opening bars of the Fantasy draw us into a spine-chilling drama. Ghostly recitative lines end in flailing flourishes. Voices weave around each other like snakes amid writhing chromaticism, sharp dissonance, and unsettling harmonic instability. The fugue subject is based on an ebullient Dutch song, *Ik ben gegroet van*. After two exhilarating trips around the circle of fifths, the fugue culminates in a triumphant resolution.

– Timothy Judd

Concerto in G major, BWV 973

after Antonio Vivaldi Concerto, Op. 7 No. 8, RV299

Allegro

The *Allegro* is the first movement from Bach's Piano Concerto in G major, BWV 973 which is a transcription of Antonio Vivaldi's original work for violin, strings, and basso continuo. Vivaldi came to fame throughout Europe for his 12 Violin Concertos, *L'estro armonico (Harmonic inspiration)*, Op. 3 published in 1712; Bach transcribed the work shortly thereafter. Today, we hear the *Allegro* as transcribed for trumpet and organ by Harald Pfeiffer.

Sonata in E Major for violin and keyboard, BWV 1016

Adagio – Allegro – Adagio ma non tanto – Allegro

Bach may have begun his six Sonatas for violin and keyboard (BWV 1014–19) before 1725—possibly in Cöthen—but it is clear that he completed them c. 1725 in Leipzig, where he served as director of the city’s church music and of the Collegium Musicum. Some of the important surviving manuscript sources, dating from the mid 1720s and 1740s, show layers of emendation, suggesting that the sonatas were played frequently and that slight modifications were introduced.

Bach’s accompanied Violin Sonatas differ from other Baroque violin sonatas in that the keyboard serves as an equal partner to the violin instead of merely providing continuo accompaniment. In many Baroque sonatas the keyboard part consists of a written-out bass line and a set of numerical figures that indicate which harmonies are to be filled in by the right hand. In these sonatas, however, Bach writes out a specific, independent part for the keyboard right hand, which engages in dialogue and independent counterpoint with the violin in the manner of a trio sonata.

In regard to formal plan, Bach did embrace tradition—in all but the sixth of the Violin Sonatas he kept the typical sonata da chiesa (church sonata) sequence of four movements—fast, slow, fast, slow. The imposing Adagio that opens the E major Sonata, shows an exception to the general predominance of trio sonata texture. In this case the violin plays sweeping phrases, the keyboard right hand plays chords in an ostinato or repetitive pattern, and the left hand provides solemn, measured pacing.

The main theme of the fugal Allegro transmits an innocent, popular character. Though the movement is clearly delineated in A–B–A form, the main theme recurs even in the cantabile B section. The return of the A section is considerably condensed.

The third movement takes the form of a modulating chaconne or passacaglia in which the repeating pattern (occasionally altered) occurs in the bass. The violin and the keyboard right hand play independent melodic lines. At the end Bach writes out a miniature “cadenza” where other Baroque composers might have left an improvisation up to the performer.

Bach’s irrepressible closing movement again displays ternary structure. The middle section features a contrasting triplet idea, though ideas from the opening section eventually appear here as well. Bach makes it very clear, nevertheless, when the opening section proper returns. Throughout the movement the trio sonata texture is fully exploited in the engaging interplay between the violin and keyboard right hand.

– © Jane Vial Jaffe

Prelude and Fugue in C-sharp Major, BWV 848

Probably the first piece in music history to have been written in the key of C-sharp Major, a closer look reveals that it went through a series of rewritings before it reached its definitive version. In the character of a brilliant étude, the Prelude in distributes the running sixteenth-note figures among the two hands; the same applies to the wide interval leaps, which actually conceal a melodic line fulfilling the function of a “bass of harmony”. Bach inserted a second stage in order to expand what would otherwise have been a mere study for the fingers, thereby transforming it into a true concert piece, while likewise exploiting the tension of harmonies that build up over a long-held pedal note on the dominant.

In three parts and in the rhythm of a bourrée, the fugue is mellifluous and brimming with sunlight, despite the tension one would normally expect from such an uncommon key. Here we have one of the first examples of a synthesis that harmoniously combines the genre of fugue with the form of a “da capo” concerto movement.

– © Luca Guglielmi

Three Chorale Preludes for Advent, Christmastide, and Lent

Wake, Awake for Night Is Flying, BWV 645

The Lutheran hymn-tune of Philipp Nicolai is central to Bach’s two settings: first in 1731 in Cantata BWV 140, and the next in 1746 as the first chorale prelude for organ in the Schübler Chorales BWV 645-650. Bach’s texture is three-part: a florid, motivic, upper voice; the hymn tune below it; and a firm, supportive bass. Bach’s brilliant working out of these elements yields a work of compelling grandeur and power. Today, we hear Ludwig Güttler’s transcription for organ and trumpet.

– © Merlin Patterson

Good Christian Men, Rejoice, BWV 608 O Man, Lament Your Great Sin, BWV 622

Found in the *Orgelbüchlein (Little Organ Book)*, a collection of 46 organ chorales composed while Bach was organist at the Weimar court (1708-17). The familiar Christmas Carol is set in canon, while the Lenten chorale is a meditation on Christ’s passion and the sins of humankind.

– © John Peterson

Sheep May Safely Graze, Cantata 208

Originally scored for two flutes, soprano, and continuo, Egon Petri offers a transcription of Bach’s aria, Sheep May Safely Graze, based on the Baroque composer’s *Birthday* Cantata.

– **Freewill Offering** –

*While Mr. Belk performs gratis for us today,
your generous contribution will ensure future concert opportunities.*

Italian Concerto in F Major, BWV 971

Allegro – Andante – Presto

The concerto after the Italian taste is an unusual piece in several respects. First, it features the keyboard as a solo instrument at a time when this was still uncommon in concerti. Yet even more oddly, it is scored for solo harpsichord throughout. This seems to be a contradiction in terms, for a concerto is typically a virtuoso display piece for a solo instrument or group of instruments, accompanied by an orchestra. The work is certainly a showpiece, and its three movements are in the fast-slow-fast order by then standard for concerti, yet how can a concerto be a concerto if there is no orchestra to accompany the soloist? Bach ingeniously answers that question by using contrasts of volume to imitate contrasts of instrumentation. The F major allegro opening movement is a firework display of ornaments and speed, but with playfully arresting moments of seemingly self-contained digression. The move to adagio and to D minor in the second movement signals a radical change, as the steady, almost funereal trudge of the left hand underpins a highly ornamented melody reminiscent of an opera aria. Intensely expressive yet subdued, the movement refutes any suspicion that floridity and pathos are mutually exclusive. Gloom is dispelled with a return to F major in the finale, a spirited presto of irrepressible energy and good cheer. Now, the softer moments seem like giggling whispers among a group of friends before the joke is shared with the whole room.

– © Cathal Twomey

Pièce d' Orgue, BWV 572

Très vite – Gravement – Lentement

Pièce d'orgue in its principal manuscript source, suggest French connections. The sectional structure and rich harmonic language are reminiscent of French Classical Offertoires and Plein Jeu movements. The work is in three main sections, each with a distinctive musical texture. The opening features a single line of virtuosic writing that incorporates sequential figurations; the majestic middle section creates a sense of tension and release through the resolution of suspended harmonies; the final part contains a series of rapid arpeggiations over relentlessly repeated notes in the pedal.

– © Kimberly Marshall

About the Artists

“... a splendid example of kindness, courage, and generosity.”

– Susan Landale; Paris, France

“Timothy Belk ranks among the top 1% of church professionals.”

– Rev. Dr. John H. Tyson; Fayetteville, NC

Distinguished UMC Pastor, Author, and University Professor

Timothy J. Belk earned Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees in organ performance from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts in Winston-Salem as a Kenan Organ Scholar. A North Carolina emerging Artist Grant recipient, he pursued post-graduate studies at the Conservatory of Music in Geneva, Switzerland earning the distinguished *Prix de Perfectionnement*. His principal organ teachers include Fulbright Scholars Margaret Snodgrass and the late Dr. John Storm Mueller, and the renowned Lionel Rogg. Two sabbatical studies for the interpretation of French romantic music include the International Course of Romainmôtier with Guy Bovet and the Salem Organ Academy with Susan Landale.



He has performed to critical acclaim across the European continent, England, Bermuda and the Southeast United States. He was recently featured at the Aarhus International Symphonic Festival in Denmark. As an accompanist, he has recorded choral works of Benjamin Britten, Zoltán Kodály and Carlyle Sharpe with the Cantata Singers of Charlotte and was featured at a Manhattan Music Festival in New York City where he performed Duruflé's *Requiem* with the Manhattan Chamber Orchestra and Festival Choir at the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine. His live recordings have been featured on American Public Media's™ PIPEDREAMS®.

Mr. Belk has been a significant influence while serving some of the most prominent congregations in the southeast including Charlotte's Covenant Presbyterian and Myers Park Baptist Churches. He served the music, worship and administrative ministries of First Presbyterian Church in Gastonia, North Carolina (2003-2014). An integral part of a diversified ministry, he coordinated the largest capital fund drive in the church's history, yielding more than \$6 million for the preservation of the architectural treasure designed by the late Harold E. Wagoner.

In addition to complete oversight of the 44,000 sq.ft. facility, other endeavors included the funding and rebuilding of both the Chapel (Schlicker) and Sanctuary (Casavant) Organs and a concert series featuring international pianists, organists, Canadian Brass, Chanticleer, Vienna Choir Boys and a host of regional talents.

Well known for his many gifts and competencies, he served Shandon Presbyterian Church of Columbia, South Carolina (2015-2019) in a time of major transition sustaining the fiscal and fiduciary stability of the ministry, raising capital funds, preserving the century old Sanctuary, installing the Lewtak Organ, and strategically growing Shandon Weekday School to the largest in Richland County.

He has consulted more than 150 organ projects, sanctuary preservations, and acoustical enhancements. Many have garnered awards for architectural excellence. He has led workshops sponsored by chapters of the American Guild of Organists, the Fellowship of United Methodists in Music and Worship Arts, and numerous organ builders. He celebrated thirteen seasons with the Annual South Carolina United Methodist Youth Choir Festival in April 2015, and has served on conference faculties of both the Presbyterian Association of Musicians and the Association of Lutheran Musicians. A frequent lecturer on the aesthetics of worship, he is an authority in the art of liturgy and its role in corporate worship.

A graduate of the National Institute of Church Finance and Administration at Emory University's Candler School of Theology, Mr. Belk is a certified church administrator. As a member of the American Guild of Organists, he has served the organization nationally as a contributor to The American Organist magazine and coordinator of the Southeast Regional Convention 2015, and locally as an officer of the Charlotte and Clearwater Chapters.

Mr. Belk began his ministry to the worshiping community of Peace Memorial Presbyterian Church as Director of Music Ministries and Organist effective December 2019. Effective September 2021, he was appointed coordinator of a Centennial Capital Enhancement Task Force to assess capital needs, define tangible costs, procure funding, implement and achieve identified goals, and equip congregants to define an outreach for intergenerational engagement.

When not walking Redington Shores or creating and sharing culinary delights, Timothy teaches communications and logistics as an adjunct instructor. His southern short stories about adolescence on a cow path, the sage wisdom of a paternal grandmother, and the loss of his beloved Labrador, Vita, have been heard on National Public Radio.

– © Vicki Collins October 2021

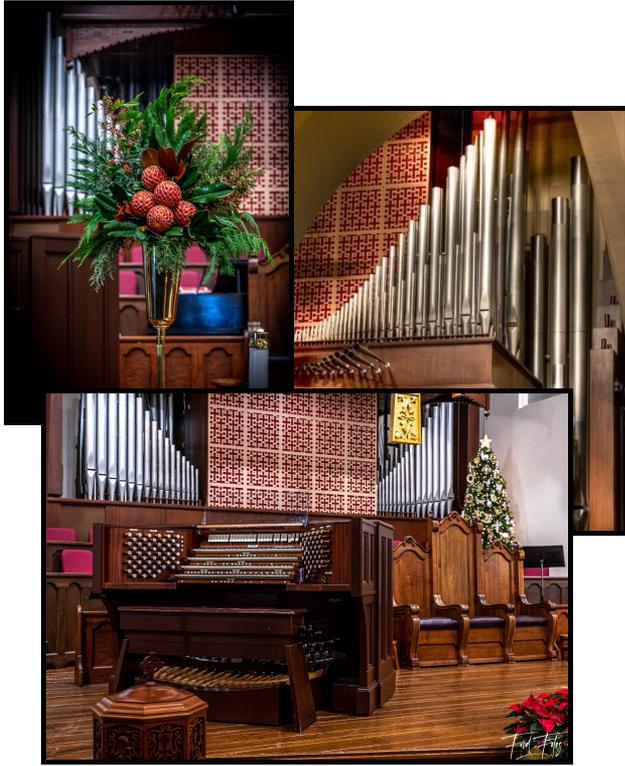
Praised for her "admirable technical finesse and expressive flair" (Baltimore Sun), pianist **Sheng-Yuan Kuan** has garnered enthusiastic receptions for her solo and chamber music performances at the Kennedy Center, Weill Recital Hall, Taiwan National Concert Hall, Musikverein in Vienna, and various music festivals and concert series throughout the US. Sheng-Yuan's collaborations with renowned musicians such as Chad Hoopes, Nobuko Imai, Stefan Jackiw, Espen Lilleslatten, Elmar Oliveira, Sir Angel Romero, Richard Stolzman, Stephen Taylor, Keng-Yuen Tseng, Time for Three, and Latin Grammy Award winning flautist Nestor Torres, reflect her passion in making chamber music of eclectic styles.



Born in Taipei, Taiwan, Sheng-Yuan relocated to America to further her music education. She holds a Doctor of Musical Arts from The Peabody Conservatory, Master of Music from Yale School of Music, and Bachelor of Music from the Manhattan School of Music, studying with famed pedagogues like Boris Slutsky, Peter Frankl, Scott McCarrey and Constance Keene. She garnered awards at competitions worldwide, including the 13th Beethoven Piano Competition in Vienna (Best Female Pianist Award, 2009), the 12th Taipei Chopin International Piano Competition (3rd Prize, 2008), Corpus Christi International Competition in Texas (2nd Prize, 2008), and New York Kosciuszko Chopin Piano Competition (3rd Prize, 2003). Sheng-Yuan performs with a wide array of ensembles, including Florida-based A's Duo, Con Brio Ensemble, Scherzo Trio, and the South Florida Chamber Ensemble. She is also a founding member of Femina Camera Trio and has played orchestra piano with the Palm Beach Symphony and New World Symphony. Sheng-Yuan is currently serving as staff collaborative pianist and adjunct keyboard instructor at Lynn University Conservatory of Music. In the summer, you can find her performing at the Heifetz International Music Institute and Rushmore Music Festival.

Kenneth Brown was assistant principal trumpet with The Florida Orchestra from 1996 until 2019. He previously held the same position with the Grand Rapids Symphony, the Crested Butte Music Festival orchestra in Colorado and was principal trumpet with the West Shore Symphony in Muskegon, Michigan. As a soloist, he has appeared with The Florida Orchestra, the West Shore Symphony and the Florida Orchestra Brass Quintet. In 1983, he toured the Eastern United States as principal trumpet with the American Wind Symphony. Originally from Florida, Mr. Brown attended the University of South Florida. More recently, he has been an active freelance musician in the Central Florida area.

Jeffrey Smick was first assistant concertmaster with the Florida Orchestra from 1995 until 2022. Jeffrey holds a Bachelor of Music Degree from Northern Illinois University where he studied with virtuoso Shmuel Ashkenasi, the first violinist of the internationally acclaimed Vermeer String Quartet. Presently, Mr. Smick serves the Tampa Bay Symphony as concertmaster.



Our Lord's Day – The Third Sunday in Lent
March 12, 2023
Three o'clock in the Afternoon

*The Chancel flowers are presented to the glory of God
in honor of Mr. Belk with thanksgiving for his exemplary leadership
to the congregation of First Presbyterian Church
in Gastonia, North Carolina
by the David Belk Cannon Foundation.*

Casavant Frères, Ltée.

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**SANCTUARY CENTENNIAL
100TH ANNIVERSARY SERVICE**
March 26, 2023 – 10:30 a.m.

A Festival of Worship for the Lord's Day

*Join us for a Service of Divine Worship with liturgy
commemorating the 100th Anniversary of the Sanctuary
and music for choir, soloist, congregation,
trumpet, organ, and percussion.*

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