

# JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)

<b>Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue</b>	[12:58]	<b>Fantasia in c minor</b>	[5:28]
1 Fantasia	[3:19]	10 Fantasia	[5:28]
2 Recitativ	[3:03]		
3 Fugue	[5:31]	<b>Italian Concerto</b>	[14:00]
<b>Capriccio on the Departure of His Most Beloved Brother</b>	[12:09]	11 (Allegro)	[4:23]
4 Arioso/Adagio. Ist eine Schmeichelung der Freunde, um denselben von seiner Reise abzuhalten. [2:31]		12 Andante	[5:06]
5 Ist eine Vorstellung unterschied- licher Cassum, die ihm in der Fremde Konnten vorfallen. [1:38]		13 Presto	[4:18]
6 Adagiosissimo. Ist ein allgemeines Lamento der Freunde. [3:03]		<b>Fantasia and Fugue in a minor</b>	[8:17]
7 Allhier kommen die Freund sie doch sehen, dass es anders nicht sein kann) und nehmen Abschied. [0:47]		14 Fantasia	[3:25]
8 Aria di Postiglione/Allegro poco	[1:14]	15 Fugue	[4:50]
9 Fuga all'imitatione di Posta	[2:42]	<b>Tocatta in D major</b>	[12:17]
		16 (Presto)	[0:32]
		17 Allegro	[2:28]
		18 Adagio	[1:56]
		19 (Fuga)	[2:33]
		20 con discrezione	[1:35]
		21 (Fuga)	[3:01]

## ANDREW APPEL, Harpsichord

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## INTRODUCTION

The reception of Johann Sebastian Bach's music, from the years of its composition to our own days, has a unique and interesting history. We know that Bach enjoyed limited fame in his lifetime, and that interest in his work was focused on his brilliant keyboard improvisations and compositions. Johann Adolph Scheibe (1739) found Bach's keyboard music, especially the *Italian Concerto*, to be unsurpassed, and equaled only by the works of Handel. Scheibe did not give Bach's great choral works such praise, preferring the cantatas of Telemann and Graun.

Fortunately, a few later 18th-century composers, particularly Mozart and Haydn were introduced to Bach's keyboard works, but rarely was anyone able to hear any of his choral music. The Bach revival and the qualities of his music that have appealed to its audiences have been as surprisingly diverse as the music is comprehensively beautiful.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, when German nationalism was a strongly emerging value, Johann Nikolaus Forkel concluded his ground-breaking biography of Bach with these words:

This man, the greatest orator-poet that ever addressed the world in the language of music, was a German! Let Germany be proud of him! Yes, proud of him but worthy of him too!

Johann Nikolaus Forkel  
Johann Sebastian, His Life, Art, and Work  
Lepizig, 1802<sup>1</sup>

For Forkel, Bach was a leading contributor to an emerging German identity.

Later in the 19th century, a religious revival characterized by Romanticized Lutheran pioussness hailed Bach as a superhuman, devout genius. Philipp Spitta's contemporaneous biography (1873-80) of the master endlessly reinforces this ideal of Bach. This new reputation of saintliness would surely have embarrassed Johann Sebastian.

Most recently, in an age of advanced and alienating technology, Bach has been known as the composer who, with Himalayan intellect rising above any considerations of orchestration and particular tone color, humanized conceptual thought, making of it a fabric of graspable beauty.

Today, one of the happiest results of the "original instrument" movement and of the developing appreciation of Bach's contemporaries has been the placing of Bach's music back into the sounds and techniques that nurtured its genesis. Newly aware of his brilliant grasp of color and his remarkable orchestrations—whether for solo violin or comprehensive forces of voices and instruments—we accept no longer Bach's reputation for timbre indifference. We now know, moreover, that Bach was no virulent enemy of opera, and that had the commission come, he might have written an extraordinary one; exaggerations of his saintliness are no longer a major consideration for acknowledging the qualities of his work, sacred or secular. And though Bach did fuse international elements into a personal style with no hint of

provincially, German nationalism applies much less to this master than to the composers of *Die Zauberflöte* or *Der Freischütz*.

Affections (affects), doctrine of. The belief, widely held in the 17th and early 18th centuries, that the principal aim of music is to arouse the passions or affections (love, hate, joy, anger, fear, etc.,...).

New Harvard Dictionary of Music<sup>2</sup>

In recording keyboard works that span his creative life, I have noticed that Bach's earliest manifested talent was the depiction of *affects* or emotions. Whether his desire was to touch us delicately, with charm and humor, to distress us with violent musical gesture, or to inspire us with a microcosmic symbol of creation in a richly conceived four-part double fugue, Bach ultimately appeals to our emotions. Thus, the comprehensive expressivity of Bach's music has been able to satisfy the specific needs of each generation that looked to his art for inspiration.

#### THE WORKS

*Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue, BWV 903*

*Fantasia and Fugue in a minor, BWV 904*

*Fantasia in c minor, BWV 906*

...it is especially in fantasias, those expressive not of memorized or plagiarized passages, but rather of true, musical creativeness, that the keyboardist more than any other executant can practice the declamatory style, and move audaciously from one affect to another...Hence, the metric signature is in many such cases more a convention of notation than a binding factor in performance. It is a distinct merit of the fantasia that, unhampered by such trappings, it can accomplish the aims of the recitative at the keyboard with complete, unmeasured freedom.

C. P. E. Bach  
The True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments  
Berlin, 1759<sup>3</sup>

With these words, Emanuel Bach acknowledges a value shared by his generation of revolutionary "pre-Romantics" and the generation of his father, Johann Sebastian Bach. **Freedom, declamation, affect:** the clear power of these qualities present in the *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue* rendered the work viable to succeeding generations, which had found most of Bach's music either superannuated or overworked.

It was through improvisation at the keyboard, both organ and harpsichord, that Bach gained considerable appreciation during his lifetime. While contemporary critics gave short shrift to Bach's compositions for church and chamber, his improvisations—fantasias, extemporized fugues, and variations on choral melodies—earned him the respect of his living predecessors and the fear of his competitors.

The *Chromatic Fantasia*, which exemplifies C. P. E. Bach's definition, is in two parts. After a declamatory statement of scale-passage work—carefully conceived to define the work's tonality—Bach awakens the harpsichord with a variety of arpeggiated configurations motivated and structured by a coherent bass line that sinks into the depths of the instrument. A sudden change of register is followed by the addition of passage work that rushes towards a cadence on a high 'a'. Passage work then takes over the texture, moving at greater speeds up and down the keyboard. The first section climaxes with both fully arpeggiated chords linked with cascades of scales.

The second section, labeled "Recitative", contrasts virtuoso extravagance with brooding recitation. At first, clear differentiation between the "recitant" and the accompanying chords brings us into the world of cantatas and passions. Slowly, this differentiation is obscured as Bach reintroduces the arpeggios and passage work of the previous section. With this layering of textures (a technique in which Bach excelled from his earliest cantatas) he concludes the *Fantasia* with startling and compelling drama.

The *Fantasia* is followed by an epitome of the improvised *Fugue*. Though the first page presents its strange, chromatic subject in an agile, yet conventional fashion, it is not long before Bach leaves this clear three-part contrapuntal texture for sonorous, idiomatic keyboard figuration. The waves of tension and relaxation that develop in this juxtaposition of the strict with the free lend a feeling of panorama to the fugue. Bach adds full chords and a passage of octaves, to close a fugue that balances convincingly with its powerful fantasia.

A Fantasia is said to be free when it is unmeasured and moves through more keys than is customary in other pieces, which are composed or improvised in meter...These latter require a comprehensive knowledge of composition...

C.P.E. Bach  
ESSAY...Part 2,  
Berlin, 1762<sup>4</sup>

The *Fantasia and Fugue in a minor* and the *Fantasia in c minor* fall into the second or "composed or metrically improvised" category. In both works, the brilliance of figuration and affect is surpassed by masterful form.

The *Fantasia and Fugue* in a minor was written in Leipzig in the mid 1720's. The *Fantasia* begins with 12 measures of music which Bach repeats, in a ritornello-like fashion, with effective variation in different keys, three times through the movement. These repetitions are separated by increasingly interesting sections of three-part polyphony. Combining elements of the rondeau and the concerto, and using textures reminiscent of North German organ music, Bach creates a work resounding with originality.

The double fugue is a feast for the mind and another example of Bach's love of layered textures. The first pages present an elegant, familiar style of four-voiced fugue. After a sudden halt, Bach introduces a chromatic descending line as second subject, which he weaves with a disjointed counter-subject. The last page combines all the fugue's material that, to quote Brady, "charms the sense and captivates the mind."

A fantasia in c minor is not of the same character as the preceding work (*Chromatic Fantasia*), but resembles rather the Allegro of a Sonata. It is an excellent work...

Johann Nikolaus Forkel  
*J. S. Bach, His Life, Art, and Work*  
(1802)\*

Forkel, looking backwards through the works of Mozart and Haydn, compares this fantasia (1738) to the more modern sonata. In fact, C. P. E. Bach may well have been inspired by this work to structure the movements of his sonatas. A closer look at some of J. S. Bach's longer dance movements—allemands and sarabandes—as well as movements by French harpsichordists, show that sonata-like structure, with a semblance of exposition and recapitulation of materials, was in the air in the early 18th century. In binary form, the *Fantasia* in c minor alternates between robust, two-part counterpoint and sections of exuberant hand crossings with large, sonorous chords. The same sort of textural freedom exhibited in the *Chromatic Fugue* enhances the effect of this fantasia. Daniel Gottlob Türk cited it as an interesting example of technical difficulty in his *Klavier-Schule* (1789). Unfortunately, the accompanying fugue survives only in a promising fragment.

#### *Toccata in D Major, BWV 912*

Paradoxically, Bach's toccatas, written in an early stage of his artistic development, represent the most mature, last flowering of this important Baroque form. The Early Baroque toccata, exemplified by the masterpieces of Frescobaldi, juxtaposed sections of free, affective writing with short, strict periods of imitative counterpoint. These works of artful instability held enormous sway throughout Europe. Fröberger brought the style back to Germany through

France. He lengthened each section and imbued the toccata with thematic unity. Louis Couperin, in his unmeasured preludes, tended to surround one extended section of polyphony with free and fantastic improvisatory music. Bach knew the works of Fröberger, as well as toccatas of North German masters. He extended the contrapuntal sections into self-contained movements. He managed, however, to retain the feeling of volatility and surprise.

The introduction to the work recorded here is an improvisation on a D-major chord with a surprising detour to a low G-sharp, emphasized by a tremolo. Fröberger's toccatas often begin with a chord written out in sustained notes. It is probable that Bach's realized introduction represented a common realization for toccatas.

The following two movements, the allegro and adagio, are constructed in a typical Baroque fashion. A short motive or phrase is used as basic building material. Slight variation and differing harmonic contexts combined with the effects of cumulation imbue a work of apparent sameness with variety. This "pattern" method of construction reminds us of Bernini's dramatic depictions of cloaks, where repeated folds of slightly changing size and position create a tension and drama that support the artist's more concretely narrative depiction.

The central f-sharp minor fugue begins with smooth and luxurious counterpoint but meanders into free episodes of the French lute style (*style luthée*). Does Bach allude to Fröberger in the mysterious "*con discrezione*" that follows? This music moves from sections of hauntingly constructed chords, to a last reminder of an often-used tremolo, to dazzling scale figuration, to resonant four-part choral-like polyphony, into a rousing fugue. Here, again, the use of repeated patterns develop into such energy and tension that Bach must end the fugue with an explosion of fleeting arpeggiations and an allusion (low G-sharp) to the first measures of this extended toccata.

#### *Capriccio on the Departure of His Most Beloved Brother, BWV 992*

Programmatic music—music that describes events—enjoyed some popularity in Germany in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, when Bach was a young man. Biber's *Mystery Sonatas*, and Kuhnau's *Biblical Sonatas* are fine examples of this style. Bach's *Capriccio* owes its genesis to the Kuhnau works, where specific sequences from the Bible are described in music with the biblical citations printed above the musical staves.

On a recent visit to Eisenach I noticed another example of "Multi-art" description. In the church of St. George, where Bach was baptized, attended services and took some of his first music lessons, the balcony is decorated with rectangular paintings of biblical scenes. Each painting is captioned, in serious Gothic German script, with a biblical citation. This naive didacticism is transformed by Bach in one of his earliest surviving works.

It is a delight to know this work of Bach. In it, we can see the composer's youthful and powerful desire to depict, to write affectively. If he is not yet the master of counterpoint and form, he has already his genius for communication, sentiment, and humor.

There is something of the precious in the *Capriccio's* opening. Cajoling ornamentation and a lilting repeated figure depict friends who attempt to dissuade Bach's brother from a long voyage. An enumeration of potential hazards in foreign lands involves modulations to keys that are rarely used in music of 1703. The general lament of friends shows Bach already aware of the expressive power of Italianate operatic gestures. The final movements are imbued with ebullience and humor. I know of few other works that allow us a window into Bach's personal life.

### *Italian Concerto, BWV 971*

Bach's profound understanding of the modern Italian instrumental style, the concerto grosso, began in Weimar. Unlike his exact contemporary Handel, who lived in Italy and worked among the men who most influenced his mature musical language, Bach learned his Italian style from printed editions, editions from Holland!

In Weimar, then an austere city ruled by the devout Duke Wilhelm Ernst, Bach was responsible for the composition of organ music and some cantatas. Bach's reputation as a fine teacher began to attract important students, and the birth of talented children directed his efforts toward pedagogical work (the fruits of which would ripen in Cöthen). How would he have the time or inclination to investigate the foreign world of Vivaldi?

The old Duke's nephew, Johann Ernst, was a violinist-composer and had been a student in Utrecht. Holland was the music printing factory for all of Europe, particularly Italy. We know that Johann Ernst returned with crates of music to be copied and that Bach was able to consult and familiarize himself with the new repertoire. It is conjectured that Johann Ernst met the blind Dutch organist J. J. Graff, who made a habit of transcribing Italian concerti for organ. Both Bach and his cousin J. G. Walther (the lexicographer) did likewise. The novel, clear, energetic music nourished Bach's style. He followed his period of transcribing with original production that included the *Brandenburg Concerti* and numerous concerti for solo instruments (including solo harpsichords, a true novelty) and orchestra.

In 1735, Bach published the second volume of his *Clavier-Übung*. This volume's purpose was to illustrate the two preeminent national styles that dominated European music, French and Italian. He went to special efforts to polarize the works by transposing the *French Overture* from its original key of c minor into b minor, and placing it next to the *Italian Concerto* in F major. This tonal relationship of the greatest distance emphasized the contrast in styles.

The *Italian Concerto* represents Bach's ideas about the Italian style in their fullest maturity, and the work's public reception was unusually positive. The two outer movements radiate with clarity of materials and form. Bach uses the two manuals of the harpsichord to delineate imaginary soloists from the orchestra. Here there are some surprises when, in the final *presto*, he gives the continuo line great emphasis on the louder keyboard while a more delicately registered soloist competes for attention. The *andante* contains one of Bach's most magnificent melodies. This is a sinuous, serpentine meandering of delicacy and invention supported by an ostinato accompanying figure (not unlike the *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*, in E major).

Just as power and drama have kept the *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue* in the fingers of pianists through the 19th century, and brilliant and prophetic form have ensured the c minor *Fantasia* a place in literature on music through those years of relative obscurity for Bach, delectable ebullience and vitality in the *Italian Concerto* place it in the center of both the modern-day pianist's and harpsichordist's repertoires.

*Notes by Andrew Appel*

### **The Instrument**

The instrument used in these performances is a copy of the 1770 Pascal Taskin harpsichord in the Yale Collection of Musical Instruments. It was built by Frank Rutkowski and Robert Robinette after their restoration of the original in 1959. One of the earliest modern harpsichords to make use of low tensile strength wire, low pitch (a=409), crow quill plectra, and an 18th century style action, it presented problems to performers in 1966, the year of its completion. Messrs. Rutkowski and Robinette serve as conservators of keyboard instruments at the Yale Collection and prior to the recording sessions, they incorporated recent research advancements into the instrument. Mr. Robinette set the historic temperament.

### The Artist

Andrew Appel performs in recital throughout Europe and the United States, taking part in Festivals from Spoleto to Aston Magna, from Amherst Early Music to Palm Beach. Recently, Appel has revised Albert Fuller's important edition of the keyboard works of Gaspard LeRoux, and has edited the remaining music to complete a scholarly edition of the complete works of LeRoux (Pendragon Press, U.S.A.). His major teachers have been Albert Fuller at the Juilliard School (where Appel completed a Doctorate) and Kenneth Gilbert at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Antwerp (where he earned a First Prize in performance). He won first prize in the 1977 Erwin Bodky Competition for Early Music. Appel has taught at the Juilliard School and is presently on the faculties of Temple University, Moravian College and New York PolyTechnical. He is the artistic director of the Four Nations Ensemble. This performance marks his recording debut.

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Finally, it is to Dr. Lloyd Schloen, whose comprehensive support of this recording, and whose continuous encouragement of my musical work have nurtured accomplishments that would have otherwise gone unachieved, that I owe the greatest debt of gratitude. I happily dedicate this recording to him. —A.A.

### Notes

1. Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Johann Sebastian, His Life, Art, and Work* (Leipzig, 1802; Eng. trans. 1820)
2. Don Randel, ed., *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music* (Cambridge, 1986)
3. Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments* (Berlin 1759; trans. William Mitchell 1949)
4. C. P. E. Bach, *Essay on the True Art... Berlin 1762*; trans. W. Mitchell 1949)
5. *Ibid.*

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Producer: David Starobin

Recorded and Edited: Jerry Bruch/Posthorn Recordings — Recording Assistant: Michael T. Hesse  
Temperament: Robert Robinette

Cover Art: Nicholas Poussin, *The Rape of the Sabine Women* (cropped)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1946

Photo of Andrew Appel: Terry Stevenson



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