



# Johann Pachelbel

Organ Works • Volume 1

**MATTHEW OWENS**

The Frobenius Organ of  
The Queen's College, Oxford



Johann Pachelbel (1653–1706)

Organ Works, Volume 1

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Matthew Owens *organ*

*The 1965 Frobenius Organ of The Queen's College, Oxford*

1. <b>Prelude in D minor, P407</b>	[5:58]	24. <b>Warum betrübst du dich, mein Herz, P483</b>	[2:31]
2. <b>Fugue in D minor, P154</b>	[2:48]	25. <b>Warum betrübst du dich, mein Herz, P484</b>	[4:08]
3. <b>Toccatà in F major, P463</b>	[2:52]		
<b>Chorale Partita 'Ach, was soll ich Sünder machen', P7a</b>		<b>Chorale Partita 'Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan', P379</b>	
4. Chorale	[0:51]	26. Chorale	[0:55]
5. Partita I	[0:55]	27. Partita I	[0:57]
6. Partita II	[0:56]	28. Partita II	[0:59]
7. Partita III	[0:55]	29. Partita III	[1:01]
8. Partita IV	[1:00]	30. Partita IV	[1:06]
9. Partita V	[1:04]	31. Partita V	[1:01]
10. Partita VI	[0:57]	32. Partita VI	[0:55]
		33. Partita VII	[1:04]
<b>Magnificat Fugues Quinti Toni</b>		34. Partita VIII	[0:43]
11. Fugue I, P314	[2:02]	35. Partita IX	[0:55]
12. Fugue II, P315	[1:40]		
13. Fugue III, P316	[1:19]	36. <b>Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott, P106</b>	[5:50]
14. Fugue IV, P317	[1:44]		
15. Fugue V, P318	[1:45]		
16. Fugue VI, P319	[1:49]		
17. Fugue VII, P320	[1:08]	Total playing time	[71:03]
18. Fugue VIII, P321	[1:48]		
19. Fugue IX, P322	[1:27]		
20. Fugue X, P323	[1:19]		
21. Fugue XI, P324	[1:00]		
22. Fugue XII, P325	[2:26]		
23. <b>Ciaccona in F minor, P43</b>	[10:56]		



### Johann Pachelbel: Organ Works, Volume 1

For many of the general musical public, Johann Pachelbel (1653–1706) seems doomed to be known by half of one work, the Canon from his Canon and Gigue in D, P37. 'One-work' composers usually turn out to have written plenty more, but in Pachelbel's case, there is a vast repertoire to explore: more than 500 pieces survive. Many of these are for keyboard instruments, particularly the organ. A contemporary of Buxtehude, Pachelbel was by all accounts an outstanding player himself, and his compositions provide a fascinating stylistic bridge between early-Baroque composers such as Frescobaldi and Froberger (both of whom influenced him) and the later music of Bach and his contemporaries.

Pachelbel's career began in Nuremberg, where his father was a wine merchant. His musical talents were quickly recognised and at the age of twenty he was appointed deputy organist at the Stephansdom in Vienna, the centre of the Habsburg Empire. As a Roman Catholic cathedral, St Stephen's had a repertoire that was unfamiliar to the Lutheran Pachelbel, but during his five years in the post he absorbed some of the Italian influences

on Austrian music at the time. In 1677, he moved to Eisenach and the following year to Erfurt. In both places he encountered members of the Bach family who remained friends – it is even possible that he met the nine-year-old Johann Sebastian at a wedding in 1694. He subsequently moved to Stuttgart and Gotha and was offered a post at Oxford University (which he declined) before returning to Nuremberg.

The striking opening of the **Prelude in D minor, P407** is a stern theme played on the pedals which is then taken up in imitation on the manuals, over a long pedal D. This process is then repeated, this time on A before the texture becomes more fragmented, with rapid broken chords. Towards the end of the piece, Pachelbel presents a series of repeated chords which are then echoed, before settling on a long dominant pedal, leading to a grand final cadence in D major.

The fugue was a form Pachelbel explored on many occasions (including the Magnificat Fugues, more than 130 of them survive). The **Fugue in D minor, P154** is a particularly striking example. Its subject is based on an alluring descending theme which has some unusual chromatic twists and turns. The result is a very compact piece (when it was first published in 1903, it was printed on a

single page) but despite its brevity, this music has breadth and a rather tragic nobility.

Pachelbel made something of a speciality of the toccata: there are fifteen surviving stand-alone toccatas by him and they contain some of his most flamboyant music. Philipp Spitta, in his celebrated life of Bach, believed that they demonstrated 'how truly Pachelbel stood about all his contemporaries as a writer for organ in the southern [German] style.' The **Toccatina in F major, P463**, opens with long pedal notes or sustained chords in the left hand, over which a florid idea is played in the upper parts. In the second section of the piece, this develops into something gentler, the music dominated by lilting pastoral rhythms.

The chorale partita is an intriguing hybrid, combining the Lutheran chorale with Italian-style variations. **Ach, was soll ich Sünder machen, P7a**, is a fine example: the theme is a chorale melody, initially presented in a formal four-part harmonisation. This is followed by six variations. While the theme is ever present in these, Pachelbel's inventive treatment of it results in a work of considerable variety, whether it is by wrapping the melody in a gently tumbling new idea, passed between the two hands, in

'Partita 1', by filling out the theme with more animated figuration in 'Partita 2', or by developing it into an idea based on broken chords with some more rhetorical flourishes in 'Partita 3'. In 'Partita 4', Pachelbel reverts to a straightforward version of the chorale melody in the right hand, now supported by running semiquavers in the bass. With 'Partita 5', he further exploits the possibilities of the chorale by setting it against a dance-like rhythm in the left hand. In the final 'Partita 6', Pachelbel puts the chorale in the bass, decorating it with toccata-like figuration on the manuals. The work as a whole is an impressive display of Pachelbel's resourceful use of variations, but the music also has something of the character of a chorale prelude, never losing sight of the theme, but handling it with sensitivity and imagination. After publication in the scholarly series *Denkmäler der Tonkunst* in Bayern in 1901 (edited by Max Seiffert), this work reached a much larger audience when it appeared in the first volume of an Anthology of German Piano Music edited by the great virtuoso and Liszt protégé, Moritz Moszkowski, published by Oliver Ditson in Boston in 1914. In his preface to this collection, Moszkowski wrote that Pachelbel's variations 'combine fluent, graceful, melodic writing with a beautiful piano [i.e. keyboard] style.'

Pachelbel's music is often hard to date with any precision, but the 95 Magnificat Fugues are known to come from the last decade of his life, after he returned to his native city of Nuremberg in 1695. After the Reformation, the Magnificat – usually sung in Latin rather than in German – had an important place in the Lutheran liturgy as part of the Vespers service. On special occasions, this was given in elaborate settings for choir and orchestra (Bach's masterpiece was written for that purpose), but more often the Magnificat was sung to one of the eight chants – on eight different 'tones' – that can still be found in the Catholic *Liber usualis*. The Magnificat on the fifth tone is one of the best-known of these chants (not least because its first few notes were borrowed – whether by accident or design – by Philipp Nicolai for his chorale melody 'Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme'). Since most of the fugues are not paraphrases of the Magnificat tones, it is unclear exactly why Pachelbel wrote them. They may have been intended as organ interludes between the verses of the chant, or perhaps to give the singers their starting notes. Equally, they might have been written as short meditations, in other words as aids to worship, or to book-end the plainchant Magnificat with organ pieces. There are twelve fugues on the 'fifth tone' (**Magnificat Fugues**

**Quinti Toni**), all of them in F major. Pachelbel's fugue subjects are very varied, and though most are in sturdy 4/4 time, the third, tenth and eleventh (P316, P323 and P324) are based on gigue-like subjects.

The **Ciacona in F minor, P43**, is recognised as one of Pachelbel's finest organ works, and is singled out for praise in George Buelow's *History of Baroque Music* as 'the masterwork' among his Chaconnes. F minor was quite an unusual choice of key in 1700, and Pachelbel's Ciacona in F minor is interesting for other reasons too: over a conventional descending bass line, the theme itself, heard at the opening, is unusually wide-ranging, including some surprising leaps, and tinged with melancholy. There are twenty-two variations which include some remarkable dissonances, and the piece as a whole is an impressive achievement. To quote Buelow again: 'There is an element of quiet beauty that distinguishes this great chaconne and gives strong testimony to Pachelbel's musical sensitivities.'

Two different chorale preludes on the melody **Warum betrübst du dich, mein Herz** (P483 and 484) demonstrate the range of his creative imagination in arranging two very slightly different versions of this chorale tune. In the first (P483), the first few notes



of the melody are announced unaccompanied, before being woven into a more elaborate two-part texture in the upper voices, under which the melody appears in slower notes on the pedals. In the second setting (P484) the chorale is initially treated like a fugue subject, but towards the end it appears in long notes on the top line to bring this chorale prelude to a rather noble conclusion.

In 1683, Pachelbel published a collection in Erfurt entitled *Musicalische Sterbens-Gedancken* ('Musical Thoughts on Dying') which included the chorale partita based on **Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan**, P379. It is one of the earliest settings of the melody (which was later used by Bach in several of his cantatas), composed in response to a tragic period in Pachelbel's private life when he lost his wife and son during an outbreak of plague. In this Chorale Partita, Pachelbel first presents the melody in straightforward four-part harmony and follows this with nine variations. Perhaps the most surprising of them is 'Partita 4' in which the melody is presented in an anguished chromatic reworking, with serpentine harmonies slithering beneath it. This is immediately followed by the most brilliant of the set, with the melody decorated by rising and falling scales. 'Partita 8' treats the melody

as a gigue, while in the last, both hands play continuous rapid semiquavers to produce a jubilant conclusion.

**Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott**, with words (and probably music) by Luther himself, is his most famous hymn. The poet Heinrich Heine speculated that it was sung by Luther and his supporters in 1521 as they arrived for the Diet of Worms, though another theory suggests the origins of the tune may have been as a battle song in the wars against the Ottoman Empire. Pachelbel's triumphant chorale prelude (P106) on this magnificent chorale melody can be heard as an affirmation of his Lutheran faith.

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### **The Frobenius Organ of The Queen's College, Chapel, Oxford**

Completed in 1965, the organ of The Queen's College Chapel, Oxford, is a landmark instrument of the classical organ revival in Britain, being one of the earliest examples of its type in the country. It was the first of several instruments in the UK built by the Danish firm of Frobenius, and the new organ featured a striking new west gallery case to a design by Fin Ditlevsen.

The Frobenius organ replaced a 1931 instrument by Rushworth and Dreaper, which the college organist of the time, James Dalton, described as a 'fairly efficient example of an extremely uninteresting type' on which he found it 'impossible to teach style'. Appointed in 1957 following the departure of his predecessor Bernard Rose, Dalton soon turned his attention to restructuring the chapel choir and replacing the chapel's organ with one built on *Werkprinzip* lines. Appointing Frobenius to build the organ turned out to be a particularly innovative decision, which led the way for further instruments being built on 18th-century principles around the country. The contract with Frobenius was signed in 1962, with a final cost of £12,300, and Dalton worked closely with the builders on its construction – particularly

in its voicing and regulation – before its completion in mid-1965.

The organ was not influenced by any particular historical instrument, the focus of the builders very much being on sonic and tonal beauty. While not extensive, the specification of the two manuals and pedals allows for a particularly wide range of colours and repertoire, with an impressive *plenum*. The tracker action is considered to be particularly responsive, while the voicing and the layout perfectly suit the size and acoustics of the chapel. In the centre of the organ, above the player, is the 'Great' division, beneath which is an enclosed 'Brustpositiv' division, while the two outer cases house the pedal division.

The organ quickly became renowned as a benchmark of modern classical instruments, both in the UK and abroad, with much appreciation by the great and good of the organ world – Nicholas Danby proclaimed it to be 'probably one of their [Frobenius's] best organs anywhere'. A great many renowned organists have taken part in the continuing weekly organ recital series instituted by Dalton on the organ's completion, and the instrument continues to give excellent service over fifty years later.

### Matthew Owens (organ)

Matthew Owens became Director of Music at Belfast Cathedral in September 2019 where he leads the fully professional, all adult choir of Northern Ireland's national cathedral. He is the head of the cathedral's music department and responsible for all aspects of the cathedral's music. Later in 2019 he founded the Ulster Consort, a new professional vocal and instrumental ensemble for Northern Ireland for which he is both artistic director and conductor. Previously, he had been Organist and Master of the Music at St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, Edinburgh (1999–2004), and Organist and Master of the Choristers at Wells Cathedral (2005–2019). Under his leadership, Wells Cathedral Choir was named by an international jury for *Gramophone* as the best choir in the world with children, and the sixth greatest overall. Matthew served as President of the Cathedral Organists' Association (2010–13); he was made an Honorary Fellow of the Guild of Church Musicians in November 2012; and in October 2017 he was made a Prebendary (Canon) of Wells Cathedral 'for outstanding service' to the Diocese and the Cathedral. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in October 2020.

Matthew was educated at Chetham's School of Music, Manchester; The Queen's College, Oxford; the Royal Northern College of Music; and the Amsterdam Conservatorium. Studying with Gordon Stewart, Margaret Phillips and Jacques van Oortmerssen, he won all the major prizes in the diplomas of the Royal College of Organists and the Silver Medal of the Worshipful Company of Musicians. As an organist, Matthew has given recitals in Australia, France, Ireland, New Zealand, Spain, Switzerland, the USA, and throughout the UK.

He has guest conducted, among others, the London Mozart Players, English Symphony Orchestra, Southern Sinfonia, Scottish Ensemble, Nash Ensemble, Brook Street Band, and the Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra. As a conductor he has made over 30 recordings with major labels, and now records exclusively for the award-winning label, Resonus Classics.

As an educator, Matthew has directed choral workshops and summer schools throughout the UK and abroad – including Australia, China, Germany, Hong Kong, Luxembourg, New Zealand, and the USA; he was Tutor in Organ Studies at the Royal Northern College of Music (1995–2001); and has contributed academic papers and publications on choristers and on



contemporary sacred music (OUP; Journal of Voice; Open Book Publishers).

He has championed new music, particularly of British composers, conducting over 200 world premieres, including works by leading composers ranging from Jools Holland to Sir James MacMillan, and John Rutter to Sir Peter Maxwell Davies. He is Director of the Cranmer Anthem Book (launched in October 2017); a project that will set all

88 Collects from the *Book of Common Prayer* to music, with some of the world's finest composers. As a composer himself, Matthew is published by Oxford University Press, Novello, and the Royal School of Church Music.

**The 1965 Frobenius Organ of The Queen's  
College Chapel, Oxford**

Built by Theodore Frobenius  
Organ case designed by Fin Ditlevsen

**GREAT**

Gedeckt 16'  
Principal 8'  
Rohrflute 8'  
Octave 4'  
Octave 2'  
Sesquialtera II  
Mixture IV  
Trumpet 8'

**BRUSTPOSITIVE (enclosed)**

Gedeckt 8'  
Principal 4'  
Rohrflute 4'  
Gemshorn 2'  
Quint 1 1/3'  
Scharf III  
Chromorne 8'  
Tremulant

**PEDAL**

Subbass 16'  
Principal 8'  
Gedackt 8'  
Octave 4'  
Mixture III  
Fagot 16'  
Schalmei 4'

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Gramophone

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*Joh. Pachelbel.*