



J.S. Bach
Harpichord Concertos
BWV 1052, 1054,
1055 & 1059

STEVEN DEVINE
Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment

J.S. Bach (1685–1750)

Harpsichord Concertos
BWV 1052, 1054, 1055 & 1059

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Margaret Faultless *violin*

Kati Debretzeni *violin*

Max Mandel *viola*

Andrew Skidmore *cello*

Christine Sticher *double bass*

Katharina Spreckelsen *oboe (BWV 1059)*

Steven Devine *harpsichord & director*

J.S. Bach (1685–1750)

Concerto in D minor, BWV 1052

- | | |
|------------|--------|
| 1. Allegro | [7:31] |
| 2. Adagio | [6:15] |
| 3. Allegro | [8:06] |

Concerto in A major, BWV 1055

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------|
| 4. Allegro | [4:04] |
| 5. Larghetto | [4:42] |
| 6. Allegro ma non tanto | [4:06] |

Concerto in D major, BWV 1054

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------|
| 7. [Allegro] | [7:28] |
| 8. Adagio e piano sempre | [5:42] |
| 9. Allegro | [2:45] |

Concerto in D minor, BWV 1059

(reconstr. Steven Devine)

- | | |
|---------------|--------|
| 10. [Allegro] | [5:40] |
| 11. [Adagio] | [3:20] |
| 12. Presto | [3:46] |

Playing time [63:30]



J.S. Bach Harpsichord Concertos, BWV 1052, 1054, 1055 & 1059

Unusually for Bach, the concertos for a single harpsichord and accompaniment exist together in a neat manuscript copy in own Bach's own hand. The complete manuscript contains seven concerti (BWV 1052 – 1058) and the fragment of an eighth (BWV 1059). Certain interesting features in this manuscript have been highlighted by scholars – particularly John Butt and Christoph Wolff – as indicating that a set of six concerti might have been originally intended (BWV 1052 – 1057). The manuscript begins with the inscription 'J.J.' (Jesu juva, 'Jesus, help') and after BWV 1057 can be seen 'Finis. S. D. Gl.' (Soli Deo Gloria). The extra concerto and fragment combined with the many corrections in the harpsichord part throughout (implying that this manuscript was a working source and not a fair copy) suggest a practical use and many commentators have surmised that Bach used these pieces during one of his two periods as director of the Collegium Musicum – a musical society centred around students at the University – which performed weekly at Café Zimmerman.

Although the manuscript provides a clear source for the pieces, the circumstances behind their creation are more complex. Of

the concertos recorded here, BWV 1054 has the most obvious origin, being a transcription of the Violin Concerto in E major, BWV 1042. Bach transposes the concerto down a tone to D major – presumably as the most normal keyboard compass at the time extended upwards only as far as d'' – and almost immediately elaborates on figurations (e.g., the bass line in bar two). In many ways this is the most 'straightforward' of reworkings – the violin figurations are elaborated and embellished to create idiomatic keyboard versions and the orchestration thinned out – mostly so the harpsichord has solo moments unsupported by the basso team.

The A Major concerto, BWV 1055, highlights interesting performance practice questions as it is the only concerto for which a complete set of parts exist – mostly in Bach's own hand. What is particular to this set is that the continuo part is figured – implying a chordal instrument, most likely a second harpsichord. It is possible that the set of parts were used with, or transcribed directly from, an original version – a solo oboe d'amore concerto is frequently cited. As the other concertos on this recording did not call for a continuo instrument and the harmony of the A Major concerto is sufficiently completed by the solo

harpsichord part, a continuo keyboard was not employed here.

Compositional history and early performances of the monumental D Minor concerto (BWV 1052) are very complex issues. Laurence Dreyfus summarises the earlier sources and their relationship to one another and the complete autograph manuscript thus:

The earliest extant versions...appear to originate in the period 1726–1729 in a version for organ and orchestra, while an early version for harpsichord may have been copied (or arranged for harpsichord) by C.P.E. Bach sometime around 1732–1734, which in turn must have been based on a pre-existent violin concerto which, for indisputable reasons of textual dependence, surely predated these versions. The elder Bach then prepared his latest version of the work for harpsichord during the second half of the 1730s. The three sets of sources are textually independent of one another – none is a copy of any other – so that at least one earlier source, a violin concerto, must precede them all.

(*Bach and the Patterns of Invention*, Harvard University Press, 1996)

However this basis for the claim of an earlier violin concerto – shared by many scholars for

many different reasons – is based on the fact that the harpsichord version in C.P.E. Bach's hand is not as sophisticated ('particularly cumbersome and awkward' – Dreyfus) as J.S. Bach's autograph version and must therefore be a transcription. C.P.E. Bach's handwritten harpsichord part feels to me simply like an earlier version which was refined and modified over a substantial time period. It is entirely possible that the 1720s cantata versions of this music – *Wir müssen durch viel Trübsal*, BWV 146 and *Ich habe meine Zuversicht*, BWV 188, where the solo role is taken by the organ with an orchestra including oboes, represents the earliest version of this work.

Certainly there is widespread acceptance that the opening sinfonia to the Cantata *Geist und Seele wird verwirret*, BWV 35 with its dramatic organ obbligato, is probably the early version of the projected harpsichord concerto in D minor, BWV 1059, of which only the first eight and-a-half bars were completed as shown in the manuscript mentioned above. The modification that Bach makes to the opening *ritornello* shape (examples 1 and 2) shows a development far and above anything seen in the other concertos in the set and gives a tantalising glimpse of the treatment Bach may have applied to the rest of the concerto in the rhythmic and harmonic modifications.



Example 1 – *Geist und Seele wird verwirret*, BWV 35, violin 1 part, bb 1-5



Example 2 – *Concerto for Harpsichord* (fragment), BWV 1059, violin 1 part, bb 1-5

Another interesting aspect is the title: *Concerto a Cembalo solo, una Oboe, due Violini, Viola e Cont[ino]*. The top staff in the extant eight-bar score is marked 'Haut de Viol.1' – that is 'oboe and violin 1'. However, as the violin and oboe don't deviate in the music that survives it is impossible to know exactly what role the oboe should take. In the opening Sinfonia to Cantata BWV 35, the oboe is part of a team of three, who play as a team dialoguing with the strings.

As the opening metamorphosis from Cantata to Concerto is so startling I had always been keen to try and imagine what shape the rest of the concerto might take and what

problems such a reconstruction might encounter.

The first movement presented the question of how to modify all the material in the Sinfonia to reflect Bach's treatment of the opening *ritornello*. Another issue was how to use the oboe; for this movement I chose to integrate it as another voice in the accompanying team: a reinforcement in the *ritornelli* and in dialogue with the violins and harpsichord in the solo accompanied passages.

In order to create a complete concerto I felt, like many others, that Cantata BWV 35

contained all the extra music needed to create a satisfactory whole. I took the first section of the first aria, *Geist und Seele wird verwirret*, from the cantata and assigned the voice part to the oboe and left the organ part mostly unaltered. The accompanying string parts were made by combining the thematic material from both the wind parts and the existing string parts. For the final movement, the Sinfonia to Part two of the Cantata provided a musically satisfying conclusion with very little alteration needed, apart from the addition of written and extemporary ornamentation in the keyboard parts on the repeat of both halves.

I make no claim to have reconstructed J.S. Bach but I did hope to enter the spirit of the musical development and transformation of which he so tantalisingly left us models.

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Steven Devine (harpsichord & director)

Steven Devine is a conductor and keyboard player who enjoys performing around the world as a soloist and in collaboration with an enormous variety of artists and ensembles. He is Principal Keyboard of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and principal with The Gonzaga Band and The Mozartists – with whom he has played and recorded concerti by C.P.E. and J.C. Bach. He is Conductor and Artistic Director of the English Haydn Festival and curates the OAE's *Bach, the Universe and Everything* cantata series. He has recorded *The Well-Tempered Clavier* and the complete solo harpsichord works of Rameau for Resonus. He is currently recording the complete harpsichord works of J.L. Krebs. His future performing engagements include concertos with Victoria Baroque, Vancouver and at the Toronto Bach Festival, solo harpsichord recitals at the London Handel and Toronto Bach Festivals, a classical programme with the Consone Quartet in Stamford and recitals at the Valetta Baroque and King's Lynn Festivals with his regular duo partner, soprano Kate Semmens. He is Early Keyboard Consultant to both the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and teaches fortepiano at the Royal Academy of Music.



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 Orchestra of the
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Steven Devine plays a double-manual harpsichord by Colin Booth (2000) after a single-manual by Johann Christof Fleischer (Hamburg, 1710).

Pitch: a=415Hz

Tuning and harpsichord preparation by Edmund Pickering.

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