

troubled him. Though remembered chiefly for his virtuosic piano compositions and innovative symphonic poems, Liszt in fact wrote almost as much sacred music as secular. His prodigious skill at the keyboard helped him to produce two major works for organ: the Fantasy and Fugue "Ad nos, ad salutarem undam" (1862) and the Prelude and Fugue on the Name B-A-C-H (1855). While neither work is specifically sacred in content, each is nevertheless an important product of Liszt's interest in functional church music and his corresponding affinity for the music of J.S. Bach.

Written during the same decade that saw the production of such well-known works as the Piano Sonata in B minor (1852-1853) and Les préludes (1848-1854), the stunning Prelude and Fugue on the Name B-A-C-H was originally composed in 1855, though it didn't reach its final state until 1870. Based on the motive B-A-C-H -- in German nomenclature, B flat, A, C, and B natural -- the Prelude and Fugue is Liszt's most thoroughly chromatic essay up to that point, clearly presaging the direction that both he and countless other composers took in the following decades.

Not surprisingly, the work takes Bach's own preludes and fugues for the organ as a model. In particular, the sliding harmonies of the Fugue owe a great deal to the chromatic style of some of Bach's works, though Liszt quite naturally takes the process several steps further than the Leipzig master, who never abandoned a sense of functional harmony. Indeed, at several points during the Fugue, built on a subject which ingeniously extends the downward semitone motion inherent in the B-A-C-H motive, it is impossible to determine a tonal center. In addition, Liszt expands the architecture of the venerable form of the fugue to an unprecedented degree; although the Prelude manipulates the four-note motive in a number of clever ways, it is in the following Fugue that the greatness of this work lies. As is typical of Liszt's fugal works, strict imitation is summarily abandoned, and the Fugue assumes a more rhapsodic character. The four-note motive appears in yet another guise at the end of the Fugue, this time as an ostinato under a series of punctuating chords. Soon after its completion, Liszt transcribed the work for piano solo (S. 529), in which form it is today best known..

*Organ Works by*  
**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**  
**Johannes Brahms • Franz Liszt**  
**Karl Richter, organ**



### **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Fantasia in F minor, K. 608**

Commissioned during the grand age of the mania for automata, Mozart managed to write this musically substantial work for a mechanical organ. The piece does satisfy the non-variant metrics required, but it is difficult to imagine how the machine designer could have programmed the machine to produce the magnificent micro-variations that could imitate the sensitive inflections achievable by a live performer on the normal organ in a performance of this work (as compared to programming a music box waltz, for example). The piece opens with a steady, tragic march tempo, accented by large chords on the downbeat, with simple canonic imitation "answers" to the treble in the bass part. There follows a fughetta with an unusual skipping, repeated note pattern that makes the minor key feel somewhat more dance-like. This is interrupted by a flowing passage on diminished-seventh chords, then the opening chords are recalled and modulated into new, more confident pathways. Pause. A delicate, major key pastoral melody sounds gently in the distance, never quite approaching near. It is varied by moderate scale runs in mostly eighth notes and simple embellishments. Suddenly, the melody shines out like the morning sun, and begins to modulate back toward the initial march tempo which has now picked up in energy. A second fughetta passage begins with a subject made from the passing tones of the pastoral tune but with a more serious air. We are led back to the opening chords again. A third fughetta begins, its subject a passing tone (scale-run) variation of the opening march tune, summing up briefly the techniques used for all the previous sections. The piece concludes with a grand cadence.

### **Johannes Brahms: Choral Preludes, Op. 122**

On May 21, 1896, Brahms' lifelong friend and champion, Clara Schumann, passed away in Frankfurt am Main. Brahms, who considered Clara to be the "greatest wealth" in his life, was so devastated that he bungled his travel arrangements and missed the funeral in Bonn. Upon his return to Ischl, where he spent his summers, Brahms' friends noticed an unsettling change in his appearance. Physicians at first told the composer that he had jaundice, though they secretly believed he was suffering from liver cancer, the disease that had killed his father. When Brahms left Ischl to "take the cure" at Karlsbad, it is possible, though unlikely, that he was unaware of the seriousness of his condition; he rarely admitted to having an illness, even if he knew it was the truth.

In was in this atmosphere that Brahms composed the Eleven Chorale Preludes, his first music for the organ since 1857. It is possible that some of the settings may have originated before 1896; most of Brahms' work on the set, however, took place during that year. Brahms may have known, if only subconsciously, that he might not live to see another summer; this may have influenced his decision to set, twice each, the chorales "Herzlich tut ich verlangen nach einem sel'gen End" (I sincerely wish for a happy end) and "O Welt, ich muss dich lassen" (O world, I must leave you"). Indeed, the second of the two "O Welt" settings contains the last notes the composer ever wrote.

Brahms' mature art pervades the Chorale Preludes, which feature the same sort of motivic density found in the late piano pieces, at the same time paying homage to Baroque-era counterpoint. In the first Prelude, "Mein Jesu, der du mich," the chorale melody sounds in the pedals, each verse preceded by a fugal episode. Because the material of the fugal passages is derived from the melody of the ensuing verse, these passages act as anticipations as well as variations. Brahms uses a similar procedure in No. 5, "Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele," in which the sixteenth-note accompanimental pattern is derived directly from the first two measures of the chorale tune.

In Nos. 9 and 10, both based on "Herzlich tut ich verlangen," Brahms employs the tune "O sacred head now wounded," presented in a highly decorative fashion in the soprano register in No. 9 and more straightforwardly in the pedals in No. 10, accompanied by constant sixteenth-note figuration. Both settings of "O Welt, ich muss dich lassen," Nos. 3 and 11, are in F major. The first, with its buoyant alternation of triple and quadruple meters, features decorative additions to the melody, which is occasionally echoed in the bass line. In the second, the individual phrases of the melody are separated by brief interludes, as if Brahms were taking a deep, hesitant breath between each line

### **Franz Liszt: Prelude and Fugue on the name of B-A-C-H**

Despite the degree to which worldly concerns and earthly delights influenced the course of Liszt's life, the composer remained throughout his years a deeply religious man. Toward the end of his life, he took minor vows and became the Abbé Liszt, resolving an internal conflict which had long

**continued**

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**1 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart:**

**Fantasia in F minor, K. 608**

**Johannes Brahms: Choral Preludes, Op. 122**

**2 Mein Jesu, der du mich**

**3 Herzliebster Jesu**

**4 O Welt, ich muss dich lassen**

**5 Herzlich tut mich erfreuen**

**6 Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele**

**7 O wie selig seid ihr doch, ihr Frommen**

**8 O Gott, du frommer Gott**

**9 Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen**

**10 Herzlich tut mich verlangen**

**11 Herzlich tut mich verlangen**

**12 O Welt, ich muss dich lassen**

**13 Franz Liszt:**

**Prelude and Fugue on the name of B-A-C-H**

**Engineer – Heinz Wildhagen Supervised By – Manfred Richter**

**Recorded January 1964, by DGG**



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