

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH *The Well-tempered Clavier II*

LUCA GUGLIELMI Silbermann Piano

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)

Das Wohltemperirte Clavier Band II / The Well-Tempered Clavier Book II – PRELUDES & FUGUES

CD 1

No. 1 in C major BWV 870 [Version B]		No. 7 in E flat major BWV 876	
1 Prelude I in C minor	02:37	[Version B]	
2 Fugue I à 3 in C Major	01:47	13 Prelude VII	03:17
		14 Fugue VII à 4	02:28
No. 2 in C minor BWV 871 [Version A]		No. 8 in D sharp minor BWV 877	
3 Prelude II in C minor	01:21	[Version A]	
4 Fugue II à 4 in C Minor	02:14	15 Prelude VIII	02:08
		16 Fugue VIII à 4	03:58
No. 3 in C sharp major BWV 872		No. 9 in E major BWV 878 [Version A]	
[Version B]		17 Prelude IX	02:55
5 Prelude III *	02:49	18 Fugue IX à 4	02:52
6 Fugue III à 3	02:11	No. 10 in E minor BWV 879 [Version B]	
		19 Prelude X	02:32
No. 4 in C sharp minor BWV 873		20 Fugue X à 3 **	03:14
[Version B]		No. 11 in F major BWV 880 [Version A]	
7 Prelude IV	04:05	21 Prelude	04:05
8 Fugue IV à 3	02:45	22 Fugue XI à 3	01:45
		No. 12 in F minor BWV 881 [Version B]	
No. 5 in D major BWV 874 [Version A]		23 Prelude	02:38
9 Prelude V	02:50	24 Fugue XII à 3	02:14
10 Fugue V à 4	02:49		
No. 6 in D minor BWV 875 [Version A]			
11 Prelude VI	01:39		
12 Fugue VI à 3	02:01		

Total Time CD 1 63:28

CD 2

No. 13 in F sharp major BWV 882		No. 19 in A major BWV 888 [Version A]	
[Version A]		13 Prelude XIX	02:03
1 Prelude XIII	03:26	14 Fugue XIX à 3	01:24
2 Fugue XIII à 3	02:45	No. 20 in A minor BWV 889 [Version B]	
		15 Prelude XX ***	02:26
No. 14 in F sharp minor BWV 883		16 Fugue XX à 3	01:53
[Version A]		No. 21 in B flat major BWV 890	
3 Prelude XIV	02:55	[Version A]	
4 Fugue XIV à 3	03:07	17 Prelude XXI	04:51
No. 15 in G major BWV 884 [Version A]		18 Fugue XXI à 3	02:18
5 Prelude XV	01:14	No. 22 in B flat minor BWV 891	
6 Fugue XV à 3	01:20	[Version A]	
		19 Prelude XXII	02:45
No. 16 in G minor BWV 885 [Version A]		20 Fugue XXII à 4	05:25
7 Prelude XVI Largo	02:01	No. 23 in B major BWV 892 [Version A]	
8 Fugue XVI à 4	03:37	21 Prelude XXIII	02:09
		22 Fugue XXIII à 4	03:37
No. 17 in A flat major BWV 886		No. 24 in B minor BWV 893 [Version A]	
[Version B]		23 Prelude XXIV	02:16
9 Prelude XVII	04:02	24 Fugue XXIV à 3	01:49
10 Fugue XVII à 4	02:55		
No. 18 in G sharp minor BWV 887			
[Version A]			
11 Prelude XVIII	02:51		
12 Fugue XVIII à 3	05:41		

Total Time CD 2 69:03

* senza sordino stop [damper raising mechanism]

** Cembalo stop [ivory stripes touching the strings]

*** Una corda stop

Version A: after the original manuscript, London (1742)

Version B: after the tradition by Johann Christoph Altnichols (1744)

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Turin, Italy · Recording Producer & Balance Engineer: Davide Ficco · Digital Editing: Roberto Chinellato · Tuning
& maintenance of the Silbermann pianoforte: Kerstin Schwartz (A= Hz 415 Temperament Neidhart Kleine
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DAS WOHLTEMPERIRTE CLAVIER [II]

Louis van Betthoven [sic],

son of the above-mentioned tenor, a boy of eleven years, who has a talent that promises much.

He plays very fluently and powerfully on the clavier, reads very well at sight, and, to say everything in a word, He plays most of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* by Sebastian Bach, which Mr. Neefe has placed in his hands. Anyone who knows this collection of preludes and fugues in all the keys which one could almost call the *non plus ultra*) will know what that means...

Carl Friedrich Cramer, *Magazin der Musik*, Hamburg 1783
Nachricht von der churfürstlich-cöllnischen Hofcapelle zu Bonn, etc

In 1744, Johann Christoph Altnickol (1720-1759), Bach's student and future son-in-law, took up the considerable task of writing out a full copy, under the guidance of his master, of a collection of twenty-four preludes and fugues in all major and minor keys. The project had occupied the *Director Musices in Leipsic* from 1739 to 1742, and he revised his pupil's copy thoroughly. Referred to in this recording as "Fassung B" and now preserved in the Berlin Staatsbibliothek (Mus. ms. Bach P 430), the fruit of that labour fulfilled Bach's desire to have at his disposal a complete, correct manuscript of a sizeable collection of works: the prelude-fugue pair, declined in all possible forms of "modern" taste. This was the counterpart to *Das Wohltemperirte Clavier* from 1722 (and we refer the reader to our liner notes for the recording thereof).

A previous, almost complete manuscript, lacking a frontispiece and with twenty-one preludes and fugues instead of twenty-four (referred to on this recording as "Fassung A"), was compiled with the valuable assistance of Anna Magdalena, Bach's second wife, and is now preserved in the British Library (Add. MS. 35021). It was probably entrusted to Wilhelm Friedemann, Bach's eldest son: in fact, one can find traces of Friedemann's handwriting in a few corrections in

the manuscript. It had probably arisen from the need to have an "official source", as authoritative as possible. Since this London manuscript lacks a frontispiece, performers traditionally follow Altnickol's version (most probably derived from Bach's own), which bears the title: *Des Wohltemperirten Claviers Zweyter Theil*.

The most fascinating thing about this "second part" is the creative process that gave birth to it. We are indebted to studies by Yo Tomita and Yoshitake Kobayashi, who have reconstructed three basic, successive phases:

– The main kernel of the collection was established by rapidly assembling twelve preludes and fugues in the most common keys (c, d, Eb, E, e, F, f#, G, g, A, a, b). Some of them bear traces of having been composed at the spur of the moment; others seem to be fair copies of pre-existing works. Almost half of these works were copied by Anna Magdalena.

– The more complicated step in the compilation occurred at the time when the next ten preludes and fugues had to be composed, now in less usual keys (C#, c#, D, d#, f, F#, g#, Bb, bb, B). In several cases such as BWV 872 and BWV 876, Bach proceeded to transpose and revise previous works of a more simple and didactic character, which had been in more common keys such as C or D Major.

– Returning from a brief stay in Berlin in the summer of 1741, Bach wrapped up the collection by adding the preludes and fugues in the keys that were still missing (C, Ab). Apart from the Prelude BWV 886 in A Flat Major (newly composed and probably the last number in chronological order), the other ones are remodelled on works written more than twenty years earlier.

After Bach's death, a number of copies of the two collections were widely circulated (now serenely "baptized" as *Das Wohltemperirte Clavier I & II*), presumably thanks to promotion on the part of a small circle of pupils and relatives who wanted to attract attention to the work's sublime mastery in terms of artistry and pedagogical usefulness. Reception was extremely positive, despite the

fact that ever since the 1730s fugues had already been considered an outdated, obsolete genre. As is well known, these works were revered by musicians such as Mozart, Beethoven, Czerny, Mendelssohn, and Schumann (who recommended that they should serve as “daily bread” for young or not-so-young pianists). Hans von Bülow somewhat hyperbolically, quasi-mystically affirmed that the *Wohltemperirtes Clavier* was to Beethoven’s sonatas as the Old Testament to the New. We note that these two collections were never outside the repertoire since the period in which they were composed: their fortuitous wide dissemination seriously calls into question the Romantic legend according to which Bach would have posthumously descended into oblivion, only to have been “retrieved” by Mendelssohn at a time when music was starting to become associated, for utilitarian purposes, with national cultures (perhaps with good reason, since small kingdoms, duchies and principalities were thereby consolidated into “unified states” such as Germany and Italy).

Despite the infinite ocean of existing studies on a subject as vast and fascinating as the *Wohltemperirtes Clavier*, I would allow myself one last observation regarding the performance of fugues. Johann Philipp Kirnberger (1720-1783, a pupil of Bach’s in the years 1739-41) remarked in the learned preface to his collection *Recueil d’Airs de danse Caractéristiques* (1777) that fugues were all composed on the basis of well-determined dance rhythms and figures. In the harshest of terms, he deplored the total ignorance and disinterest he observed regarding that subject: “Above all, it is impossible to compose or to perform a fugue well if one does not know every type of rhythm, and therefore, because this study is neglected today, music has fallen from its ancient dignity and fugues are not appreciated as they once were, because through miserable performance which does not know how to differentiate the variety of phrases and semiphrases, or more or less accented beats, can only generate nothing else than a mere chaos of notes.” (Kirnberger, 1777b, Preface p. 2). We have therefore attempted to do justice to Kirnberger’s reflections on fugues by applying, as much as possible, the step or rhetorical gesture of the corresponding dance.

The result is undoubtedly fascinating, since it achieves an objectivity of rhythmic accentuation that enriches our perception of the ancient *tactus* on which every form of composition and performance was based. The usual subjectivity of the performer is thereby reduced – but this can only be beneficial, since readings of Bach otherwise tend to be either arid and insipid on the one hand, or whimsical and too exalted on the other.

Regarding the instrument we have chosen for this recording of Vol. II, we have selected a copy by Kerstin Schwarz of the fortepiano built by Gottfried Silbermann in 1749, now preserved in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg. In recent years a clearer picture has emerged of Bach’s *instrumentarium*, and one can infer that in the last ten years of his life he had a Silbermann fortepiano at his disposal. By then he regarded it as a valid alternative to the harpsichord, the clavichord, and the *Lautenwerck*, which, taken together, embodied the generic term *Clavier*. Silbermann, for his part, relied on Bach’s assistance as *Cantor* to help him sell his valuable instruments (a fortepiano cost as much as a *Capellmeister’s* annual salary!), and he was entirely indebted to Bartolomeo Cristofori for the design of his fortepiano mechanism, which he later applied to the robust makeup of harpsichords of late German build.

Eva Badura-Skoda (*née* Halfar, *1929 †2021) had brilliantly shown, in her last major published work, how Silbermann could have had the “live”, hands-on opportunity to copy the Cristofori mechanism: when he was building an organ for the local parish of Crostau around 1730, he could have thoroughly examined a *gravecembalo che fa il piano e il forte* that belonged to Count Watzdorf. This recording of the *Zweyter Theil* of *Das Wohltemperirte Clavier* is dedicated to her memory as well to her husband, the late Paul Badura-Skoda (*1927 †2019), incomparable pianist and soloist on historical fortepianos, tireless scholar, and protagonist of an artistic career that goes to the early collaborations with artists of the stature of Wilhelm Furtwängler to our time.

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Das Wohltemperirten Claviers
Zweiter Theil,
bestehend
in
Praeludien und Fugen
durch alle
Töne und Semitönen
verfertigt
von
Johann Sebastian Bach,
Königlich Sächsisch und Churfürstl. Sächs.
Hof-Compositore und Capellmeister
und Director Chori Musici
in Leipzig.

[B.W. 871]

ARTISTIC REMARKS ON THE INDIVIDUAL PIECES

1. BWV 870 [C Major]

Prelude: with its sumptuous harmonies and its allusions to organ style (for ex. BWV 545a), this prelude dates back to Bach's period in Köthen and has survived in four different versions reflecting four distinct stages of composition including one, perhaps harmonically the boldest, entitled "Preludio di Bach", sent by Wilhelm Friedemann through Johann Baptist Pauli in Fulda to Padre Martini in Bologna.

Fugue: in three parts, this jovial fugue in gavotte rhythm contrasts decisively with the prelude's solemnity. Although this piece likewise stems from the Köthen years, it is decisively modernized by its galant style, its light mood, and brilliant technique. In bars 76-83, for instance, one can note the crossing over of the left hand made fashionable by composers such as Rameau, Hurlbusch, Scarlatti, Della Ciaja, and many others.

2. BWV 871 [C Minor]

Prelude: in the style of a *perpetuum mobile*, this prelude in bipartite form is almost like a two-part invention or a *Duetto* (cf. *Clavierübung III*). It makes ample use of the rhetorical figure of *circolatio*, which expresses uncertainty or doubt.

Fugue: sporting sober austerity almost like a *ricercar*, this fugue in four parts and a pavane rhythm contains masterfully conceived strettos, particularly one that combines the subject, its augmentation, and a free inversion.

3. BWV 872 [C Sharp Major]

Prelude: this prelude is divided in two sections: a proper prelude and a three-part fughetta (*Allegro* in 3/8 time). The first section is derived from a previous prelude in C Major (BWV 872a) written in five parts in half-notes that were marked with the laconic indication *arpeggio*. The revised version is written out in full, featuring an elaborate *arpeggio* in four (!) parts.

The first arpeggiated section is played on this recording with a particular mechanism of the Silbermann *Pianofort* that raises all dampers, a precursor of the sustaining pedal. This effect is also indicated by Beethoven in the Moonlight Sonata, where he requires that “the entire piece must be played with utmost delicacy and without dampers” (*Si deve suonare tutto questo pezzo delicatissimamente e senza sordino*).

Fugue: in gavotte rhythm, in three parts, featuring a brief theme subjected to all kinds of counterpoint treatments: strettos, diminutions, augmentations, inversions. This is one of the fugues that exist in preceding versions, much shorter and in another key (in this case, C Major). Bach’s new version is a masterpiece of the art of rewriting and reusing pre-existing material. Particularly the cadenza-like finale enriches and ennobles the entire piece.

4. BWV 873 [C Sharp Minor]

Prelude: a meditative page in flowing 9/8 time, almost like a trio sonata. According to Harry Halbreich, this is one of the pieces that best displays Bach’s thorough acquaintance with the music of Rameau.

Fugue: in three parts and featuring two subjects (a first one in the manner of a *perpetuum mobile*, the second one in descending pathetic/chromatic style), this fugue sports a sparkling gigue rhythm in 12/16 time, reminiscent of the best examples of Buxtehude’s *manualiter* fugues, such as BuxWV 163.

5. BWV 874 [D Major]

Prelude: with a brilliant character resembling Scarlatti, this piece is in modern, tripartite form (exposition-development-reprise), although lacking a “true” second theme to make it a proper pre-Classical sonata. After the initial descending peroration, we nevertheless have the descending motif with the notes tied in pairs (a quasi-lombard rhythm), which could

be regarded as a second motive.

Fugue: in four parts, of purely vocal character, almost like a *ricercar in stile antico*, this is a great study in stretto technique. Here the theme is subjected to a veritable counterpoint tour de force, including a stretto *per arsin et thesin* of great effect – a feat difficult to imitate!

6. BWV 875 [D Minor]

Prelude: like BWV 870, this is one of the pieces that exist in several previous versions: originally just a little *Hausmusik* prelude, it was subsequently expanded until attaining a quasi-Vivaldian level of virtuosity, featuring the flamboyant warrior spirit of the *batteries* style one can likewise observe in BWV 1052.

Fugue: in three parts, this is a particular type of fugue in which the first part of the subject can be combined in stretto with the second, thus making it almost like a double fugue. The subject’s first section in triplets of semiquavers contrasts with its second section in descending chromatic quavers. Although harmonically austere in appearance, this fugue is mostly about rhythmic elaboration, constantly contrasting binary and ternary rhythm, juxtaposed as well as superimposed.

7. BWV 876 [E Flat Major]

Prelude: reminiscent of BWV 998, although here in 9/8 time, this prelude is in a galant style *luthé*, in ABA form with a free da capo section. This is one of Bach’s most serene, relaxed pages. The apparent simplicity of two-part writing and the use of an extremely rarefied bass line makes this prelude one of the examples of the so-called “late style” in which Bach wrote in response to Scheibe’s harsh criticism of 1738. This sort of “musical response” (which reminds the famous “response to just criticism” that led Shostakovich to compose his 5th Symphony) tries to combine the *galant* style with the high-quality and density of

the harmonic-musical framework provided by the “old style”. Such pieces include not only BWV 998, but also 997, 906, and 823.

Fugue: in a strict organ style reminiscent of BWV 552/2, this fugue in four parts, containing three strettos, is an academic fugue almost by the book. Bach transposed it one semitone higher from a previous version in D Major. Although this fugue’s contrast with the preceding prelude could not be greater, Bach succeeds in creating an admirable *coincidentia oppositorum*.

8. BWV 877 [D Sharp Minor]

Prelude: in bipartite form, this is almost a two-part invention or a *Duetto*, in “tight” imitative writing with the parts in close succession; in the second section, the piece modulates considerably. The choice of notating it in D Sharp Minor (instead of E Flat Minor) could be dictated by the fact that an older version was in D Minor.

Fugue: in four parts, this is one of the most expressive, freely treated fugues in Bach’s entire output. Counterpoint gives way to a rhetorical procedure that presents the subject in the widest imaginable variety of harmonic contexts.

9. BWV 878 [E Major]

Prelude: in bipartite form, in three parts, and in *galant* style, this is a perfect example of the “amorous” use of the key of E Major. One shall particularly note the “revival” of imitative writing in the two upper parts over a pedal note, of the kind one encounters in toccatas or fantasias by Frescobaldi, Pachelbel, and Fischer.

Fugue: in four parts, clearly derived from the model of Fischer’s *Ariadne Musica*, this is one of the fugues with the tightest counterpoint in the entire cycle, featuring a great number of strettos and presenting the subject in diminutions. Scholars have praised this fugue’s “Palestrinian” style and its solemn, “cathedral-like” atmosphere.

10. BWV 879 [E Minor]

Prelude: in bipartite form, this is almost like a two-part invention or a *Duetto*. Alternating among the hands, the long trills over which the musical discourse takes place are strongly reminiscent of BWV 775. The writing, despite its apparently effortless fluidity, contains a number of artifices including melodic inversion. One shall note the use of the *Schleifer* ornament (*tierce coul e en montant* and *en descendant*), played, on this recording, with one of the Silbermann Piano’s special devices: the *Cembalozug* (“harpichord register”), consisting in a series of ivory plates that graze the string in front of the damper bar, thereby producing a particular nasal buzzing intended to imitate the plucking of harpsichord strings.

Fugue: in three parts, featuring an energetic gigue rhythm underscored by the rhetoric use of the *staccato* marking on the crotchets. Almost in *stilus fantasticus*, the theme contains a greater variety of rhythmic note values than any other fugue subject in the cycle. The piece’s pronounced *concertante* character is enriched by an additional final cadenza handed down to us exclusively in the copy made by Altnickol.

11. BWV 880 [F Major]

Prelude: featuring polyphony *in stile severo* in five parts, akin to Frescobaldi’s *durezza e ligature*, this prelude has the composure of a solemn double of a *sarabande* combined with the meandering form of a free-form *rondeau*; it is sumptuous, dignified, and serene.

Fugue: in three parts, the fugue is in the rapid rhythm of a 6/16 gigue. Its agile, highly virtuosic writing, of a light gaiety rare in Bach, does not deprive itself of featuring a dramatic passage in B Flat Minor prior to a sweeping finale that dares to use the “prohibited” rhythmic values of demisemiquavers, which contemporary theorists would have deemed inconceivable in the context of a fugue.

12. BWV 881 [F Minor]

Prelude: in bipartite form, with the rhythm and style of a galant sonata, quasi *andante*, this prelude's taste is akin to the most melancholic pieces by Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philipp Emanuel. Worthy of note as a kind of anticipation of modern blues (!), the *punto inteso contra remisso* (false relation) in Bar 63 produces an extraordinarily languorous effect: here we have a feeling of spleen before its time.

Fugue: in three parts, in a moderate *bourrée* rhythm, this is a masterful example of the use of the interval of the diminished seventh to every possible rhetorical effect, yet without falling into dramatic cliché. Here we likewise have an extraordinary example of *stile misto* (mixed style), combining fugue, sonata, dance, and character piece.

13. BWV 882 [F Sharp Major]

Prelude: just as in the first volume of the Well-Tempered Clavier and in the Goldberg Variations, Bach introduces a sort of “new beginning” in the middle of the cycle, with the clearly marked characteristics of an *Ouverture* or *Preambulum*. In this case we are dealing with an admirable example of a synthesis of styles, oscillating between an *ouverture* in the French manner, an elegant, “strolling” *Sarabande*, and a concerto movement. The scintillating key of F Sharp Major helps create a refreshing degree of tension and constant interest for the listener.

Fugue: in three parts and in a whimsical gavotte rhythm, this fugue features a subject clearly characterized at its beginning (by a trill with resolution) and at its end (by a figure consisting in a sixth leap followed by an *appoggiatura*), and these elements form the basis of its subsequent development. The piece's spirited character should neither detract our attention from this fugue's perfectly harmonious proportions, nor from the amount of *scientia* involved in its elaboration.

14. BWV 883 [F Sharp Minor]

Prelude: in the style of a broad *Arioso* with the free tripartite form of an aria with *ritornello* and varied reprise, this prelude's gentle, light melancholy mood is almost like that of a galant sonata. Its free alternation among semiquavers duplets and triplets is reminiscent of the *Allemande* that opens the 4th Partita, BWV 828.

Fugue: in three parts and featuring three subjects, in serious gavotte mood, this fugue is strongly marked by each one of its subjects and by the learned use of intervals: leaps in the case of the first subject, steps combined with dotted rhythm for the second, and a perpetual motion of semiquavers in the rhetorical figure of a *circulatio* in the case of the third.

15. BWV 884 [G Major]

Prelude: in bipartite form, almost in the style of a modern *concert étude*, this piece was conceived to replace BWV 902, which was originally foreseen, but deemed as having a style that was too conservative. Alternating *bariolage* exchanges among the hands which come together at the end, this luminous piece is one of those closest to the modern style, almost like an imitation of Scarlatti's *Essercizii*.

Fugue: in three parts and in the rapid rhythm of a “diminished” *passepied*, this fugue re-elaborates a former *Fughetta* that dates back at least to the Köthen years. It exploits the subject's continuous movement in semiquavers to create a cheerful atmosphere of serene happiness. The brief cadenza in rapid thirty-seconds is the fruit of Bach's revision, and it prepares for the last peroration with the final complete appearance in the tenor part of the main subject.

16. BWV 885 [G Minor]

Prelude: In the style of a French *Grand Plein Jeu* for organ, this is one of the most solemn preludes in the entire cycle, nodding in the direction of the seriousness of an *Ouverture*,

but also sounding as if it stemmed from an improvisation. The tempo indication “Largo” – such indications are rare in Bach – helps underscore the character of impressive Baroque majesty.

Fugue: in four parts, in the solemn rhythm of a *polonaise*, this is one of the most powerful fugues in the Second Volume. Thoroughly expressive, thanks to its “eloquent rests” à la Buxtehude and its repeated notes in *stile legato*, the subject forms a firm basis for musical development on the same elevated level as the prelude. But this piece’s stroke of genius lies in the application of double counterpoint, in which intervals that had been carefully avoided in *stile antico* are now applied consciously in their inversion, thereby creating a true and proper *stile moderno* fugue. A grand rhetorical gesture in the finale is associated with the twofold reappearance of “eloquent rests” before a pedal note in the descant leads to the final cadence.

17. BWV 886 [A Flat Major]

Prelude: this is probably the most extended prelude, and the latest, of all this *Zweyter Theil*. It draws its energy from the motivic contrast between a group of robust chords accompanied by a bass moving in rapid figurations (*tirata*), on the one hand, and, on the other, a melodic gesture that automatically implies modulation. With their propulsive force, these elements lead us through several keys; the Neapolitan sixth in bar 74 is worth noting (the fugue will likewise conclude on a cadence introduced by the same harmony).

Fugue: in four parts and sporting a gavotte rhythm, this piece stems from the revision, extension, and transposition of a former *Fughetta* in F Major. Just as in the corresponding Fugue in A Flat Major in Vol. I, it is surprising to note how the “arduous” key of A Flat Major (regarded, along with F Sharp Major, as one of the most difficult, most unadapted keys in music) is “redeemed”, to a certain extent (as likewise achieved by Beethoven in his

Sonata Op. 110 and in Wagner’s *Parsifal*) thanks to the Apollonian serenity of the fugue’s subject, combined with the countersubject’s languid descending chromatic line, which practically acquires the dignity of a second subject, since it is *obbligato*.

18. BWV 887 [G Sharp Minor]

Prelude: in the bipartite form of a sonata movement, here we have the only indications of dynamics found anywhere in the two volumes of the Well-Tempered Clavier: a *piano* indication in Bar 3 and a *forte* indication in Bar 5. Accomplishing an ascending gesture that folds back on itself, the main melody gives rise to one of the most thrilling and tormented modulatory sequences in the entire collection, accompanied by a thoroughly modern “broken bass”. It is interesting to observe Bach’s use of five-finger technique starting on a chromatic note – an achievement that would lead to the revision of many traditional dogmas regarding fingering.

Fugue: with its introspective, dreamlike character, this double fugue in three parts sports a *siciliano* rhythm. With its successive triplets of quavers, the first subject’s extreme uniformity is noteworthy, and contrasts with the countersubject’s long-short rhythm values, which are likewise predominant in the second subject.

19. BWV 888 [A Major]

Prelude: with the character of a *Pastorale*, the piece is in the form of a three-part invention (or “Sinfonia”), and is reminiscent of the prelude in BWV 806 as well as of the central section of the chorale prelude BWV 656 *O Lamm Gottes unschuldig*. It consists in a study of the application of the counterpoint artifice of melodic inversion (*rectus-inversus*) to a galant form.

Fugue: in three parts, with a concealed gavotte rhythm, likewise reminiscent of the “Eighteen” chorale preludes pertaining to the Leipzig manuscript, in this case particularly

BWV 664 *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr'*. The constant flowing of musical discourse is only once interrupted, towards the middle of the piece, by a robust cadence in which the left hand plays a low A, one of the lowest available notes on the keyboards of this period.

20. BWV 889 [A Minor]

Prelude: in bipartite form, this prelude resembles a two-part invention or a *Duetto*, in a pronounced pathetic-chromatic style, featuring the characteristics of a *Lamento* but without entirely developing that genre's potential. Rather than stemming from a need for expression, the ascending and descending chromatic lines seem to serve more as an excuse for continuous harmonic "exploration". This prelude is played here using one of the Silbermann fortepiano's mechanisms: *una corda*, e.g., the possibility of sliding the keyboard to one side in order to strike only one of the two strings, whereby the instrument acquires an ethereal, delicate hue. The same mechanism was certainly also used for tuning purposes.

Fugue: a robust, dramatic three-part fugue, expressing the "violence of sacred wrath" (Harry Halbreich). The striking subject might have served as a model for the *Kyrie eleison* fugue in Mozart's *Requiem*, while the agile countersubject in thirty-seconds almost provides the thrill of witnessing the veil of the Temple being torn in two (*velum templi scissum est*).

21. BWV 890 [B Flat Major]

Prelude: in the form of a monothematic tripartite sonata movement, here we can clearly distinguish an exposition, a development section, and a varied recapitulation, leading to a culmination attained by the boldest imaginable harmonies, and ending in a coda. The original meter indication of 12/8, then corrected by Bach to 12/16 (with the corresponding rewriting on the part of Altnickol), indicates a character more like a *Pastorale*, but at a tempo that is not too staid, and does not reach the sheer virtuosity of a *gigue*. In this case,

as in the *Prelude in A Major*, it is noteworthy to point out Bach's application of the counterpoint artifice of melodic inversion (*rectus-inversus*) to a galant form.

Fugue: in three parts and in a moderate minuet rhythm, the fugue's subject bears a resemblance with the *Orgelbüchlein* prelude-chorale *Herr Gott, nun schleuß den Himmel auf* (BWV 617), but here in major mode. Here we have a skillful synthesis of galant style elements within strict counterpoint. This piece thereby succeeds in blending the form of fugue with a bipartite dance in which the first section flows without particular interest, but concentrates its compositional focus instead on the second section, featuring triple counterpoint in which a harmonic figuration is permuted at the octave, at the tenth, and at the twelfth.

22. BWV 891 [B Flat Minor]

Prelude: this piece introduces a final triptych of preludes and fugues which are a true monument of their respective genres. The just proportions, the utmost mastery of technique and expression – everything leads us to grasp that we are dealing with the manifestation of a "late style" upon which it would be impossible to improve any further. In the particular case of this prelude, we are dealing with a gigantic three-part invention ("*Sinfonia*"), treated with the greatest amount of freedom in its tripartite form. The main theme is rarely enunciated in its entirety, delegating, instead, to various fragments the function of maintaining the musical development and variations. In bar 55 we note Bach's preferred tendency to introduce the reprise on the subdominant in order to have a subsequent response on the tonic. It is noteworthy how this piece concludes with two successive lower pedals on the dominant, followed by an descant pedal note on the tonic.

Fugue: in four parts and with the solemn rhythm of a *Sarabande*, this is a superb piece in view of its counterpoint technique, its grandeur, and its melancholy, second only to certain unsurpassable pieces in *Art of Fugue* such as *Contrapunctus XI*. Originally written in 3/4,

then rewritten in double meter, this piece testifies to Bach's continual endeavor to make the writing adhere as closely as possible to the sounding archetype "in his head". The subject is one of those that contain an almost infinite potential for development and permutations, of which, as Kirnberger notes, Bach only uses a minimal portion; he nevertheless selects material capable of producing the richest rhythmic combinations and the most unusual harmonies.

23. BWV 892 [B Major]

Prelude: a thoroughly modern *allegro di concerto*, with an unparalleled fullness of sound and an astounding variety of harmonic modulations. Bach uses a broken accompaniment figure similar to an Alberti bass, but which reveals itself to be a thematic *bariolage* exchanged between the left and right hands. Virtuoso writing with crossing of hands immediately recalls Scarlatti, as well as the third movement for solo harpsichord in Bach's sonata for harpsichord and violin, BWV 1019.

Fugue: in four parts, with two subjects, this is the last fugue *in stile antico* in Vol. II, recalling the most solemn organ style. The first subject, consisting in leaps (*tutto de salti*) is clearly derived from 17th-century *ricercar*; the second, almost exclusively stepwise, is a free arabesque in sixteenth notes arranged in circling descending groups of four. Bach conceives this fugue in three great sections in which he explores the effects of invertible counterpoint at the twelfth along with the utterly modern melodic use of the seventh in major mode.

24. BWV 893 [B Minor]

Prelude: in free tripartite form, this is the last example of the grand *two-part invention* genre, although this piece has a complicated story in terms of meter. Initially conceived

for halved rhythmic values in common time (C), it was immediately rewritten in *alla breve* meter, with doubled values and with an *Allegro* tempo indication. We note Bach's extreme punctiliousness, foregoing the use of the *gruppetto* mark to write out the ornament in full. This last prelude of the 1744 cycle is characterized by its dynamic mood and its restlessness. **Fugue:** in three parts and an energetic *passepied* rhythm, its subject is extremely jagged, combining a descending triad, an ascending run, and a series of vertiginous octave leaps that prove thoroughly useful in the course of the piece as they gradually raise the tension in an extended arc. Although probably surpassed by its counterpart in Vol. I in terms of counterpoint artifices, development, and the interest provided by the subject, we nevertheless profoundly admire Bach's capacity for having created the best possible "complement" to the pieces in the preceding cycle. With the sum total of the two collections, we have the impression of "squaring the circle", balancing the Human with the Divine through the mediation of the Spirit which everything moves.

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LUCA GUGLIELMI SILBERMANN PIANO

Luca Guglielmi (*Turin, Italy, 1977) is a conductor, composer, soloist of keyboard instruments (harpichord, organ, clavichord, fortepiano, modern piano) and musicologist, renowned for his historically informed interpretations of music of all periods, his wide repertoire from Gesualdo to Strawinsky, and his strong commitment into the study and application of phenomenology of music.

Recently, he has been appointed assistant conductor to Jordi Savall (with whom he collaborated since more than twenty years) in his long-term project of complete performance and recording of Beethoven's 9 Symphonies with Le Concert des Nations. Moreover, in November 2019 he made his debut with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra in a concert featuring Mozart's Ballet from Idomeneo and Symphony Nr. 41 Jupiter. Honourable Mention at the XII International Organ Competition in Bruges, he studied harpsichord with Ton Koopman and Patrizia Marisaldi, organ with Vittorio Bonotto, piano with Eros Cassardo, composition with Alessandro Ruo Rui, renaissance counterpoint and historic composition with Sergio Pasteris.

He has collaborated with artists such as Cecilia Bartoli, Sara Mingardo, Barbara Bonney, Philippe Jarrouskey, Giuliano Carmignola, Paolo Pandolfo, Ottavio Dantone, Gabriele Cassone, Paul O'Dette, Katia and Marielle Labèque and ensembles like Il Giardino Armonico, Ricercar Consort, Ensemble La Fenice, The Rare Fruits Council, Freiburger Barockorchester, RAI Turin Orchestra (under Jeffrey Tate, Roberto Abbado, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos).

Luca Guglielmi has a wide discography of more than 50 CDs, among them 18 solo titles devoted to a repertoire from Frescobaldi to Mozart, for such labels as: Accent, cpo, Vivat, Hänssler Classics, Stradivarius and Elegia. His recordings of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* and Pasquini's *Sonate da gravecembalo* have been awarded with the Diapason d'or; his last organ recording Bach in Montecassino, for the English label Vivat, received an Editor's Choice from the Gramophone magazine. Luca Guglielmi is professor of harpsichord, fortepiano and chamber music at ESMUC (Escola Superior de Musica de Catalunya) in Barcelona.

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