

## The Organ Music of J. S. Bach

Second edition

This is a completely revised edition of volumes I and II of *The Organ Music of J. S. Bach* (1980), a bestselling title, which has subsequently become a classic text. This new edition takes account of the Bach scholarship of the last twenty-five years. Peter Williams's piece-by-piece commentary puts the musical sources of the organ works in context, describing the form and content of each work and relating them to other music, German and non-German. He summarises the questions about the history, authenticity, chronology, function and performance of each piece, and points out important details of style and musical quality. The study follows the order of the Bach catalogue (BWV), beginning with the sonatas, then the 'free works', followed by chorales and ending with the doubtful works, including the 'newly discovered chorales' of 1985.

Peter Williams is an internationally renowned Bach scholar and performer. He was Professor of Performance Practice and the first Director of the Russell Collection of Harpsichords at the University of Edinburgh, Arts and Sciences Distinguished Professor at Duke University, NC, and until recently John Bird Professor at the University of Wales, Cardiff. He has written numerous books on the organ, organ history and organ repertoire. The first edition of *The Organ Music of J. S. Bach* was published in 1980 (vols. I and II) and 1984 (vol. III).

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Peter Williams  
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## Contents

<i>Preface</i> [page vii]	
<i>List of abbreviations</i> [ix]	
BWV 131a Fugue in G minor [1]	
BWV 525–530 Six Sonatas [2]	
Preludes and Fugues (Praeludia) BWV 531–552 [37]	
Eight Short Preludes and Fugues BWV 553–560 [141]	
Miscellaneous pieces BWV 561–591 [145]	
Concertos BWV 592–596 [201]	
BWV 597 and 598 [225]	
<i>Orgelbüchlein</i> BWV 599–644 [227]	
<i>Schübler Chorales</i> BWV 645–650 [317]	
Chorales formerly called ‘The Eighteen’ BWV 651–668 [336]	
Chorales from <i>Clavierübung III</i> BWV 669–689 [387]	
Chorales formerly called ‘The Kirnberger Collection’ BWV 690–713 [429]	
Miscellaneous chorales BWV 714–765 [453]	
Chorale variations (partitas) BWV 766–771 [499]	
BWV 790 [528]	
Four Duets from <i>Clavierübung III</i> BWV 802–805 [529]	
BWV 943, BWV 957, BWV 1027a and 1039a, BWV 1029.iii, BWV 1079.ii, BWV 1085 [536]	
Chorales now called The Neumeister Collection BWV 1090–1120 [541]	
Further works, in part of uncertain origin [575]	

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Peter Williams  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

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*vi Contents*

*Calendar* [583]

*Glossary* [585]

*Bibliography* [591]

*Index of names* [608]

*Index of BWV works cited* [618]

## Preface

The organ works of Bach never cease to arouse ideas, and a revision enables me to express a few more. While the text is now largely new, its style and method still work towards framing questions rather than defining answers, aiming to give the performer and scholar some bearings on a unique repertory, one about which there will always be more to say. In this connection, I found particularly heartening the commendation of an early reviewer of the first edition (G. M. Leonhardt), who discerned that I had more ideas than I ‘wished to lay down in print’.

Since the early 1970s when work on this book originally began, the findings of Bach research have been published at such a pace that it has become necessary to add new material and delete some of the original. The outlines of this revision are:

1. Volumes I and II are now combined, omitting duplication but now including the chorales first published in 1985 (so-called ‘Neumeister Collection’). The original volume III (*A Background*) needs a separate revision, taking in the results of current thinking on historical performance and how it might contribute to an understanding of the music.

2. The listing of sources for each piece, already selective in the first edition, is revised and avoids duplicating fuller information now found in:

the *Kritischer Bericht* volumes accompanying NBA IV  
 the second edition of Schmieder’s BWV (including the ‘Little Edition’ 1998)  
 the *Bach-Compendium*, planned Werkgruppen J, K

In the sources as now summarized, I use the word *via* to suggest who it was – as MS-owner, copyist or teacher – through whom certain extant copies derived.

3. I have kept in mind a newer approach to the whole notion of ‘The Complete Organ Works of Bach’, recognizing that this repertory is not fixed and that editions may be giving unfair privilege to one version (perhaps a chance survival) above another, presenting a uniform appearance unknown to the composer himself, and neglecting works, right through to the *Art of Fugue*, that suit organ as one of several keyboard instruments. Doubtless too, transcriptions played a bigger part than is suggested by the *Schübler Chorales* and the five extant concertos.

Much help in rethinking questions of authenticity is given by the ongoing work of Dr Reinmar Emans and Dr Ulrich Bartels (Göttingen), who

*viii Preface*

generously shared with me their researches so far on ‘doubtful’ works attributed at some time or other to J. S. Bach. If the ‘Neumeister Chorales’ are the work of J. S. Bach, so must many another piece be, and Bach’s work must have been at first indistinguishable from that of his local predecessors. It must also have gone through more versions or variants than are now known.

4. For several reasons the book still resists dating this music. First, there is a reasonably clear, broad chronology to most of it; secondly, greater precision is won only by speculating from inconclusive sources and putative resemblances to other music (hence the frequent disagreements amongst writers); and thirdly, with living and changing works of this kind there may be a misleading, old-fashioned positivism in the whole notion of trying to pinpoint a particular moment in their life.

5. I have been at pains to refer to other composers in relation to J. S. Bach, not least since these are now better served by editions and studies than they were in 1973. It is clear to anyone closely studying any keyboard works of Bach that he knew a great deal of music, doubtless far more than is listed in current literature, and responded to it in various ways: music not only of major composers – those most often commented on ever since the Obituary of 1754 – but also of minor.

6. I have selected only certain sources concerning the history of texts and melodies, partly because Lutheran hymnology is a major study in itself with limited relevance to Bach’s settings, partly in order to give due weight to the work of C. S. Terry, who still gives the organist many a useful hint.

7. This is also the place, perhaps, to acknowledge again the contribution made to the study of Bach’s organ works by some earlier writers, especially Philipp Spitta and Hermann Keller. Though not always known to musicians today, their musical *aperçus* are imaginative and useful, worthy of consideration whatever factual shortcomings they reflect and however many new territories have since been explored.

In revising this book I have received particular help from Ulrich Bartels, Mark Bighley, Lucy Carolan, Reinmar Emans, John Druessedow, David Humphreys, David Ponsford, Tushaar Power, Penny Souster and Tim Taylor, for which I would like to thank them warmly. Planning a full-length monograph for which one is entirely responsible helps one to develop an interpretation of a subject, and accordingly I acknowledge gratefully three early associates at Cambridge University Press for the opportunity they gave me a quarter of a century ago: Michael Black, publisher; Eric Van Tassel, copy-editor; and †Peter le Huray, originator (with †John Stevens) of the Cambridge Studies in Music. Peter le Huray proposed this study originally, and in affectionate and regretful memory of him I would like to offer this revised edition.

## Abbreviations

- ABB* the *Andreas Bach Book* (MS Lpz MB III.8.4)
- AfMw* *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*
- AM* *Acta musicologica*
- Am.B. MSS in Amalienbibliothek (SBB): Princess Anna Amalia's library
- AMBB* *Anna Magdalena Bach Books* (1722, 1725)
- AMZ* *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*
- Bä Bärenreiter edition
- BG *Gesamtausgabe der Bachgesellschaft*, 46 vols., Leipzig, 1851–99
- BJ* *Bach-Jahrbuch*
- BR MSS in Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale
- BuxWV Georg Karstädt, *Thematisch-systematisches Verzeichnis der musikalischen Werke von Dietrich Buxtehude* (Wiesbaden, 1974)
- BWV Wolfgang Schmieder, *Thematisch-systematisches Verzeichnis der musikalischen Werke von Johann Sebastian Bach* (Leipzig, 1950; 2nd edition, Wiesbaden, 1990)
- BzBf* *Beiträge zur Bachforschung*
- CbWFB* *Clavierbüchlein für Wilhelm Friedemann Bach*
- cf. compare
- c.f.* *cantus firmus*
- Cons MSS in Brussels, Bibliothèque du Conservatoire Royal de Musique
- Darmstadt MSS in Hessische Landes- und Hochschulbibliothek
- DDT *Denkmäler der Deutschen Tonkunst*
- Dok I *Bach-Dokumente*, vol. I, ed. Werner Neumann and Hans-Joachim Schulze (Kassel etc., 1963)
- Dok II *Bach-Dokumente*, vol. II, ed. Werner Neumann and Hans-Joachim Schulze (Kassel etc., 1969)
- Dok III *Bach-Dokumente*, vol. III, ed. Hans-Joachim Schulze (Kassel etc., 1972)
- DTÖ *Deutsche Tonkunst in Oesterreich*
- EB Edition Breitkopf (Breitkopf & Härtel)
- EF Editions Fuzeau
- EKG *Handbuch zum Evangelischen Kirchengesangbuch* = R. Köhler, *Die biblischen Quellen der Lieder*, vol. I.2 (Berlin, 1964)
- EM* *Early Music*
- EP Edition Peters



*x List of abbreviations*

- Grönland MS in Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek
- Hamburg SUB MSS in Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek
- HE Hänssler Edition
- HJ *Händel-Jahrbuch*
- HK Berlin Hochschule der Künste, Berlin (formerly Hochschule für Musik)
- KB *Kritischer Bericht* (Critical Commentary to NBA), here referring to the relevant NBA volume
- LBL MSS in London, The British Library
- lh left hand
- LM MSS in Yale University Library (Lowell Mason Collection)
- Lpz Go. S MSS in Lpz MB (Sammlung Manfred Gorke: Gorke Collection)
- Lpz MB Leipziger Städtische Bibliotheken, Musikbibliothek
- Mf *Die Musikforschung*
- MGG *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 1st edn, Kassel (1949–79)
- Mö MS the Möller Manuscript (SBB MS 40644)
- MQ *Musical Quarterly*
- MT *Musical Times*
- MuK *Musik und Kirche*
- NBA *Neue Bach-Ausgabe. Johann Sebastian Bach. Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke* (Leipzig, Kassel, from 1954)
- NBG *Neue Bachgesellschaft*
- NZfM *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*
- Ob the *Orgelbüchlein*
- Obituary the ‘Nekrolog’, in *Dok III*, pp. 80–93
- P MS scores in SBB (*Partitur*)
- Peters Peters edition, see EP
- rh right hand
- RV Peter Ryom, *Verzeichnis der Werke Antonio Vivaldis: kleine Ausgabe* (Leipzig, 1974)
- SBB MSS in Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung
- Schmieder 1950 see BWV
- SIMG *Sammelbände der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft*
- St MS parts in SBB (*Stimmen*)
- Stuttgart WL MSS in Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek
- Vienna Cod MSS in Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek
- Washington LC MSS in Washington, Library of Congress
- WTC1 *The Well-tempered Clavier*, Book 1
- WTC2 *The Well-tempered Clavier*, Book 2