

Johann Sebastian

BACH

Arrangements
& Transcriptions

audite

Jean-Baptiste Dupont

Cavaillé-Coll Organ of St. Sernin, Toulouse

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH*

**Ricercar a 6 from 'Musical Offering',
BWV 1079 8:19**

**Prelude and Fugue in B-Flat Minor,
BWV 867***

I. Präludium 2:55

II. Fuge 3:08

**Sinfonia from 'Wir danken dir, Gott,
wir danken dir', BWV 29** 4:29**

**Meine Seele erhebt den Herren,
BWV 648 2:37**

**Kommst du nun, Jesu,
vom Himmel herunter, BWV 650 3:28**

**Chaconne from 'Partita No. 2
in D Minor', BWV 1004 15:14**

Suite No. 1 in C Major, BWV 1066

I. Ouverture 7:17

II. Courante 2:52

III. Gavotte 3:45

IV. Forlane 1:32

V. Menuett 4:10

VI. Bourrée 3:58

VII. Passepied 4:26

**Ricercar a 6 (organo pleno version)
from 'Musical Offering', BWV 1079 8:34**

**Arr.: Jean-Baptiste Dupont
Max Reger* • Alexandre Guilmant****



Transcribing Bach

The idea of arranging and transcribing Johann Sebastian Bach's works for the organ often seems eccentric, considering the abundance and excellence of the repertoire he left for this instrument. Yet, transcriptions are remarkably numerous, frequently undertaken by leading composers who were themselves prolific. Among those associated with the organ, one can name Guilmant, Widor, Dupré, or Reger – all of whom left substantial corpus of music for the instrument. Added to this list are figures such as Gounod, Dubois, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Liszt, Busoni, Elgar, Rachmaninov, and Stokowski. Many of these works have been adapted for instruments or ensembles that did not exist during the Baroque period, such as the symphony orchestra or the piano (whether for two or four hands). Contemporary and electronic music could also be included, showcasing the incredible universality of Bach's œuvre.

Johann Sebastian Bach was himself an enthusiastic transcriber, as evidenced by his adaptations of Vivaldi and Corelli concertos. A multi-instrumentalist, Bach reworked, arranged, and transcribed many of his own pieces to enable performance on different instruments – for example, his partitas and violin concertos, the 'Schübler Chorales' (drawn from cantata movements), Fugue BWV 539, the first movement of the fourth Trio Sonata, and more.

Transcribing and arranging Bach's music for the organ today invites several considerations. The first involves the evolution of the organ itself. Like the orchestra, which developed, expanded, and became symphonic in the 19th century, the organ also evolved, acquiring new and previously unimaginable sounds and capabilities during Bach's time. Secondly, comparing Bach's organ music to his ensemble works reveals a freer treatment of individual voices in instrumental quartets, for example, whereas organ compositions sometimes demonstrate a more cautious approach. This shows Bach's skill in rendering an implied counterpoint perceptible – even on the organ.

In Bach's later masterpieces, such as the *Musical Offering* and *The Art of Fugue*, the instrumentation is unspecified, sparking much debate. Moreover, the richest counterpoints, featuring the most voices, are typically written with each voice on its own staff in the autograph manuscripts (e.g., the four-voice fugues in *The Art of Fugue* are written on four staves; the 'Ricercar a 6' from the *Musical Offering* on six staves). For instruments with relatively limited polyphonic capacity (compared to the organ or ensembles), Bach's ingenuity shines in his ability to suggest or create the illusion of counterpoint and great polyphonic richness, as seen in the 'Chaconne' concluding the *Violin Partita No. 2*, BWV 1004.

The desire to transcribe does not always stem from intellectual motives. Sometimes it arises from the performer's personal affinity for a piece not written for their instrument, necessitating an adaptation process.

My own transcriptions reflect all these considerations. When making them, I kept in mind the modern organ's orchestral potential, enhanced by combination systems. For instance, while reworking the 'Chaconne', I couldn't help but imagine the sonic spectrum of the organ at Saint-Sernin in Toulouse, which influenced some of my choices, audible from the very first variations (with a distant nod to Liszt's *Weinen, Klagen*). This renowned piece has inspired countless adaptations, including for the organ. My version builds on a transcription by Alexei Schmitov intended for the Mutin-Cavaillé-Coll organ at the Moscow Conservatory. From this starting point, I revisited the source material – Bach – while analyzing other arrangements (Schumann, Mendelssohn, Busoni, and Messerer) to thoroughly rework the piece. Listeners may occasionally notice intentional references or borrowings from these versions.

Arranging the first orchestral suite, particularly the 'Overture', was a notably complex task. As mentioned earlier, the free and richly textured counterpoint in the piece makes it unplayable on the organ as written. Even after adaptation, the technical challenges remain significant, including daunting pedal passages, intricate voice crossings, and wide spacing of parts requiring complex hand movements. The other, more graceful movements of the suite might have been better suited to performance on a Baroque-style organ. Nonetheless, we decided to attempt the recording on the Saint-Sernin organ. Ultimately, despite the relative imprecision of the Barker machine in the Recit division (1845), the instrument's unique personality transcends all the music played on it.

The 'Ricercar a 6', drawn from the *Musical Offering*, presents its own challenges due to the complexity of its counterpoint, which makes immediate and exact performance by a single musician impossible. After starting my arrangement, I decided to draw inspiration from Reger's transcriptions of Bach's works, structuring it as a grand crescendo. This version opens the album. However, a fully *organo pleno* version (which closes the album) sounds surprisingly effective on the Saint-Sernin organ. Unable to choose between them, I opted to record both versions at the last minute.

The other transcriptions included on this album, particularly those by Reger and Guilmant, feel entirely natural when performed on a Cavaillé-Coll organ. Finally, the recording would have been incomplete without including Bach's own transcriptions of his works, represented here by selections from the 'Schübler Chorales'.

Jean-Baptiste Dupont

JEAN-BAPTISTE DUPONT

Jean-Baptiste Dupont is a musician who embraces the vast richness of the organ repertoire, spanning from the Renaissance to contemporary works, with a particular appetite for improvisation. He is recognized as one of the prominent representatives of the French improvisation school.

He has performed nearly 600 recitals across much of Europe, the United States, and Russia, in prestigious venues such as the cathedrals of Berlin, Cologne, Copenhagen, London, Monaco, New York, Paris, Toledo, Vienna, and Zurich, as well as the Mariinsky Theatre in Saint Petersburg, the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, and the Berlin Philharmonie, among others. He is regularly invited to give masterclasses and participate in academies on both improvisation and interpretation. Additionally, he has served as jury member of competitions in the United States, France, Sweden, Norway and Germany.

Jean-Baptiste Dupont has been a finalist in numerous international competitions, excelling in both improvisation and interpretation. Notably, he won the 1st Prize at the St. Albans International Improvisation Competition (2009), the 2nd Prize and the Audience Award at the “Mikael Tariverdiev” International Performance Competition in Kaliningrad (2009), and the 3rd Prize at the “Xavier Darasse” International Performance Competition in Toulouse (2008). In 2006, he was awarded the François Vidal Prize by the city of Toulouse. He is also a laureate of the Glinka Foundation and the De Boni Arte Foundation. His education included studies in organ, harpsichord, and piano under renowned teachers such as Michel Bouvard, Louis Robilliard, Philippe Lefebvre, Jan Willem Jansen, and Thérèse Dussaut.

His discography comprises around fifteen recordings, including the ongoing complete organ works of Max Reger, which has been highly praised by international critics, as well as two albums of improvisation. His previous audite recording of Widor’s 8th Symphony was hailed as a reference recording by the music press.

In 2012, he was appointed Titular Organist at Bordeaux Cathedral. Two years later he co-founded the association Cathedra (dedicated to sacred music at Bordeaux Cathedral) and serves as its co-artistic director. He is actively involved in the project to reconstruct the cathedral organ.

Dupont has extensive experience in organology, gained through his work on the inventory of organs in the Midi-Pyrénées region and his involvement in numerous organ restoration projects between 1998 and 2004. Since 2018, he has worked as an independent expert in this field.

audite



The Organ in Saint-Sernin, Toulouse

The earliest known organ at Saint-Sernin dates back to the late 17th century. In 1845, a new organ was built by Daublaine & Callinet. After the restoration of the basilica under the direction of Viollet-le-Duc, in 1887 the church administration commissioned Aristide Cavaillé-Coll to restore the organ. Cavaillé-Coll reused much of the excellent material from the Daublaine & Callinet organ as the groundwork for what became one of his most remarkable instruments. The work was completed in 1889, with a commission of 13 members taking three days to examine the instrument in detail before issuing an enthusiastic report that immediately elevated the Saint-Sernin organ to the status of a masterpiece.

The organ underwent several modifications during the 20th century, including adjustments to the wind system and relatively minor changes to the stop list. From 1993 to 1996, it was fully restored by Boisseau-Cattiaux, which returned the instrument to its original state. The restored organ was inaugurated during the first "Toulouse les Orgues" festival, held in October 1996.

Finally, the organ was overhauled again in 2017–2018 by the Robert Frères organ manufactory, with the assistance from the Pesce company for the tracker action. This restoration successfully returned the organ's full nobility and poetic expressiveness.

<i>1^{er} clavier</i> Grand-orgue 56 notes 20 jeux	<i>2^e clavier</i> Positif 56 notes 10 jeux	<i>3^e clavier</i> Récit express. 56 notes 14 jeux	Pédale 30 notes 10 jeux	Effets auxiliaires
Montre 16'	Montre 8'	Quintaton 16'	Flûte 16'	Orage
Bourdon 16'	Bourdon 8'	Diapason 8'	Soubasse 16'	Pédale en 4
Montre 8'	Salicional 8'	Flûte harmonique 8'	Quinte 10 ² / ₃ '	Tirasse GO
Bourdon 8'	Unda maris 8'	Gambe 8'	Grosse Flûte 8'	Tirasse pos
Flûte harmonique 8'	Prestant 4'	Voix céleste 8'	Violoncelle 8'	Tirasse rec
Salicional 8'	Flûte douce 4'	Flûte octaviante 4'	Octave 4'	Anches Ped
Gambe 8'	Carillon III	Octavin 2'	Bombarde 32'	Anches GO
Prestant 4'	Trompette 8'	Cornet V	Bombarde 16'	Anches Pos
Flûte octaviante 4'	Basson / hautbois 8'	Bombarde 16'	Trompette 8'	Anches Rec
Quinte 2 ² / ₃ '	Clairon 4'	Trompette harmonique 8'	Clairon 4'	Chamades
Doublette 2'		Clarinette 8'		Expression R
Fourniture V		Basson/hautbois 8'		Tremolo
Cymbale IV		Voix humaine 8'		Go en 16
Cornet V		Clairon harmonique 4'		Appel GO
Bombarde 16'				Pos / GO
Trompette 8'				R / GO
Clairon 4'				Pos / R
Clairon 2'				R en 16
Chamade 8'				Appel R
Chamade 4'				Pos en 8 et 16

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photos:
p. 5: Laurent Belet
art direction and design:
AB•Design

POINT
D'ORGUE



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