

*St. Martin's Church,  
London Road, Worcester  
Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2010  
4:00 pm*

*Students from  
New College Worcester*

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# Program

## **J.S. Bach: Prelude in F major BWV556, from Eight Short Preludes and Fugues**

Although the short preludes and fugues are well-known, particularly by amateur but studious organists, who often learn most if not all of them, It has to be noted that little is known about them. We do know that these eight works have been attributed to Johann Sebastian Bach (pictured) but that the attribution is possibly spurious. Research by those familiar with the music of the period have theorised that the music is similar to that of Johann Tobias Krebs, a known pupil of Bach.

Furthermore, the preludes and fugues have been described as clavichordistic by university professors the world over, and recordings of the work played on a period pedal-clavichord are in circulation.

Despite its controversial attribution, this particular prelude, BWV556, challenges the organist with lengthy triplet passages in both hands, but the simple pedal line, mainly consisting of cycles of fifths, makes up for this encumbrance.

The prelude is in ternary form. It starts and finishes in F major, with numerous modulations in between the two identical renditions of the opening theme.

## **G. Fauré: Andante Moderato in C# minor from Pieces breves, Op. 84 No. 5**

Fauré's Op. 84 set still seems obscure, but was introduced by the Associated Board as an exam piece in 2009. However it still remains an undiscovered gem by many recital pianists.

The piece begins with tranquil semiquaver passages before modulating from C# minor to G# major. At this point the music becomes increasingly chromatic, but maintains a close tie with the original key. Eventually the music diminuendos throughout its C# major coda into silence.

The work is challenging for the pianist because of the rapidly-moving, yet coherent chromaticism, but also because of the large stretches and jumps the pianist must tolerate, to bring out the beauty of this treasure.

## **W.A. Mozart: Andante from Piano Sonata No. 16 in C major, K545**

The “Sonata facile,” was composed at the same time as Mozart’s epic thirty-ninth symphony, and was finished circa June 1788. It was first printed in 1805. The opening theme of the first movement became so well-known, that it even managed to become Granny’s theme in the Looney Tunes cartoons.

The second movement is in the key of G major. The music modulates in the middle of this movement to the parallel minor, and its relative major. The movement then modulates to the tonic, and, after the main theme and development are repeated, the movement concludes in anticipation of the third, rondo movement.

## **J.S. Bach: Prelude and Fugue in E minor BWV555, from Eight Short Preludes AND Fugues**

The Short Preludes and Fugues have been used as voluntaries for church services countless times, on account of their short length and the little exertion required for the performance.

However BWV555 is one of the more complex preludes and fugues from this set. The prelude taxes the organist with some pedaling substantially more awkward than that found in Prelude No. 4. The organist also has the task of sharing multiple voices between the two hands.

The fugue starts with a chromatic subject, and passes the subject into a further three voices. The fugue then adopts an intermediate theme with a challenging quaver accompaniment, before the grand coda in the tonic key of E minor.

## **J.S. Bach: Pedalexercitium, BWV598**

This piece remains even more mysterious than the Short Preludes and Fugues. This is because the work is not only less than half a page long, it is also unfinished. The exercise does not finish with a plagal or perfect cadence, but the closest cadential description would be imperfect. Many organists have improvised a final perfect cadence, but this performance will terminate where Bach left it, on the D at the bottom of the pedal board.

The Pedalexercitium is listed in the Bach-Werke-Verzeichnis as a "Miscellaneous Organ Work," along with the transcriptions Bach did of Vivaldi concertos.

The work is dominated by streams of semiquavers in the pedal, and modulates a number of times, before coming to a section with the left foot playing a D on the beat, and the right foot playing some very demanding jumps.

It is suspected that Bach first drafted this work when he had access to the fabulous and enormous Weimar court organ.

## **J.S. Bach: Prelude in G major, No. 15 from The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I, BWV860**

This prelude is in many ways similar to BWV556, in that a triplet rhythm provides the backbone of the piece. Bach says to play the left hand in common time, but the right hand in the obscure timing of 24/16.

The Well-Tempered Clavier, or WTC for short, is one of the most well-known collections of pieces amongst keyboardists. It is said that Beethoven's father forced the young Beethoven to memorise and give immaculate performances of all 48 preludes and fugues. "The 48," is full of variety, which is why a few are often called in to augment the programs for keyboard recitals.

The first book is dated 1722, one of Bach's Köthen years, and bares the dedication, "for the profit and use of musical youth desirous of learning, and especially for the pastime of those already skilled in this study."

The WTC is on a level with Bach's Die Kunst der Fuge, to make up some of the most influential keyboard works in Western classical music.

## **S. Rachmaninoff: Prelude in C# minor: From Morceaux de Fantaisie, Op. 3 No. 2**

This prelude is one of Rachmaninoff's most well-known solo piano pieces, and commences with the immortal motif, A, G#, C#.

The prelude is 62 bars long, and the two outer sections rotate around the central motif.

It is subtitled, "The Bells of Moscow," and it should be noted that Rachmaninoff also wrote other pieces themed by church bells, most famously the Piano Concerto No. 2, where the opening 8 bars represent a crescendoing church bell.

In the Marx Brothers film *A Day at the Races*, Harpo plays the prelude and in doing so, destroys a piano. He retrieves from the wreckage the piano strings, which he then uses as a harp.

Rachmaninoff was proud of this piece, and actually recorded it several times.

At one point in the *fff* (fortississimo) section, Rachmaninoff writes that the pianist must simultaneously play a block chord of twelve notes.

## **E. Grieg: Notturmo in C major, From Lyric Pieces, Op. 54 No. 4.**

The Lyric Pieces, published in 10 volumes, contain some of Griegs most well-known pieces.

The Op. 54 set also contains, "March of the Trolls," and "Bell-Ringing."

The Nocturn begins and ends in C major, and although it seems long, it is very interesting for someone interested in music to study, because of the clever ways which grieg varies the original themes.

It challenges the pianist with chromaticism, large jumps, and a wide range of dynamics. It is a good piece for pianists to display their unique style, and the piece requires much imagination and interpretation from the performer.

## **J.S. Bach: Prelude in G major, BWV541**

The prelude in G major is part of one of Bach's spectacular preludes and fugues. The single-line introduction is shared by both hands before the the prelude becomes multi-voiced and the pedal makes it's first statement.

Written in triple time the prelude uses very advanced footwork, combined with what are generally very full hands on the manuals.

It is sad, however that little is known of this piece, and it can only be approximately guessed where it was composed.

The virtuosic nature of this piece makes it a strong choice for conservatoire auditions and the major key makes it appropriate for special events, such as weddings and baptisms.

# Biographies

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# Johann Sebastian Bach



Bach was born on March 21, 1685, in Eisenach, Thuringia, into a family that over seven generations produced at least 53 prominent musicians. His father, Johann Ambrosius, was the Kapellmeister of the court in Eisenach. By the time he was 11 he was an orphan. He went to live and study with his elder brother, Johann Christoph, an organist in Ohrdruf, and a former pupil of Pachelbel. This was when he would have started his organ studies. In 1703 he moved to Arnstadt, where he became church organist. In October 1705, Bach secured a one-month leave of absence in order to study with the renowned Danish-born

German organist and composer Dietrich Buxtehude, who was then in Lübeck and whose organ music greatly influenced Bach's. The visit was so rewarding to Bach that he overstayed his leave by two months.

He was criticized by the church authorities not only for this breach of contract but also for the extravagant flourishes and strange harmonies in his organ accompaniments to congregational singing. He was already too highly respected, however, for either objection to result in his dismissal.

In 1707 he married a second cousin, Maria Barbara Bach, and went to Mülhausen as organist in the Church of St Blasius. He went back to Weimar the next year as organist and violinist at the court of Duke Wilhelm Ernst and remained there for the next nine years, becoming director of the court orchestra in 1714. The organ at his disposal was small but had a 32" pedal, which pleased him, and at first he was allowed ample time to practise on and compose for it. By 1713 he was looking elsewhere for a better paid post, and in 1714 he was promoted to the post of Konzertmeister, which involved the composition of a cantata each month. In Weimar he composed about 30 cantatas.

In 1717 Bach began a 6-year employment as chapel master and director of chamber music at the court of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen. During this period he wrote primarily secular music for ensembles and solo instruments. He also prepared music books for his wife and children, with the purpose of teaching them keyboard technique and musicianship. These books include the Well-Tempered Clavier, the Inventions, and the Little Organ Book.

Bach's first wife died in July 1720. The next year he married Anna Magdalena Wilkin, a fine singer and 20-year-old daughter of a court trumpeter. She bore him 13 children in addition to the 7 he had had by his first wife, and she helped him in his work by copying the scores of his music for the performers in later years, as copying was not yet completely mechanized.

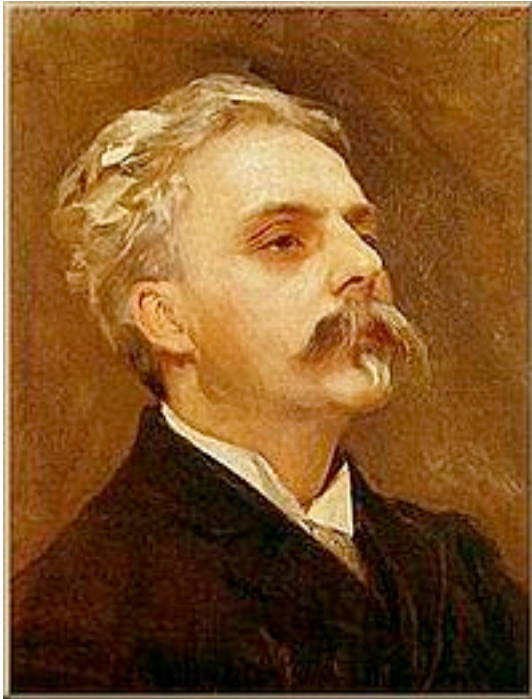
Bach moved to Leipzig in 1723 and spent the rest of his life there as Kantor at St Thomas's Church. His position as musical director and choirmaster at that church and its affiliated school in Leipzig was unsatisfactory in many

ways. He squabbled continually with the town council, and neither the council nor the populace appreciated his musical genius. They saw in him little more than a stuffy old man who clung stubbornly to obsolete forms of music.

He and his pupils provided the music at four churches, two of which had elaborate Sunday services including a cantata on alternate Sundays. For grander occasions he could augment the scholars with town musicians, but in general he was restricted to inadequate forces for a back-breaking task. In the first years at Leipzig he wrote (or sometimes reworked) a cantata for every Sunday and major festival, composing about 150 between 1723 and 1727. Many of these are extraordinarily difficult to perform, especially the solo parts, and they were probably given inadequately (one report records that the performances were usually bad and that Bach thrashed the boys afterwards). But Bach's variety of forms, and more especially his delight in finding an exact musical equivalent to the imagery of the verse, marks him out from his contemporaries. Most of the cantatas open with a section for chorus and orchestra, continue with alternating recitatives and arias for solo voices and accompaniment, and conclude with a chorale based on a simple Lutheran hymn. The music is at all times closely bound to the text, ennobling the latter immeasurably with its expressiveness and spiritual intensity.

The St John Passion was composed before he left Cothen, and was one of the first of his works to be heard in Leipzig, on Good Friday 1724. He probably composed other works which have been lost, but his finest setting, the St Matthew Passion, was too elaborate for the taste of the congregation and the city elders. He also wrote the epic Mass in B Minor. Among the works written for the keyboard during this period are the famous Goldberg Variations; Part II of the Well-Tempered Clavier; and the Art of the Fugue, a magnificent demonstration of his contrapuntal skill in the form of 16 fugues and 4 canons, all on a single theme. Bach's sight began to fail in the last year of his life and he died on July 28th, 1750, after undergoing an unsuccessful eye operation.

## Gabriel Urbain Fauré



Fauré was born in Pamiers, Ariège, Midi-Pyrénées, in 1845 to Toussaint-Honoré Fauré and Marie-Antoinette-Hélène Lalène-Laprade. At the age of nine he was sent to study at the École Niedermeyer, a school which prepared church organists and choir directors in Paris, and continued there for eleven years. He studied with several prominent French musicians, including Camille Saint-Saëns, who introduced him to the music of several contemporary composers, including Schumann and Liszt.

He became assistant organist at Saint-Sulpice as accompanist to the choir, and became a regular at Saint-Saëns' salon.

Saint-Saëns was absent from his job many times and Fauré would have to

fill in for him at l'Église de la Madeleine. Fauré became choirmaster of that institution in 1877. He also undertook voyages to Weimar, where he met Liszt and Cologne in order to see productions of Richard Wagner's "Der Ring des Nibelungen."

Miraculously Fauré failed to come under the influence of Wagner's musical style.

In 1883, Fauré married Marie Fremiet, with whom he had two sons. In order to support his family Fauré spent most of his time in organising daily services at l'Église de la Madeleine and teaching piano and harmony lessons. He only had time to compose during the summers. He earned almost no money from his compositions because his publisher bought them, copyright and all, for 50 Francs each. During this period Fauré wrote several large scale works, in addition to many piano pieces and songs, but he destroyed many of them after a few performances, only retaining a few movements in order to re-use any motifs.

His lifestyle improved in the 1890s when he travelled to the exotic land of Venice, became chief organist of l'Église de la Madeleine, obtained the title of composition instructor at Le Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris, and eventually became the director of that institution. He was elected to the Institut de France, but his hearing began to fade and distort irregularly, so after a long battle he gave up teaching, and ultimately resigned from the conservatoire.

Gabriel Fauré died in Paris from pneumonia in 1924. He was given a state funeral at l'Église de la Madeleine and is buried in the Cimetière de Passy in Paris.

## Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart



Johannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus Mozart, pictured here when he was very young, was one of the most prolific and influential Composers of the Classical era. Although the era was short composers like Mozart and Beethoven worked to give the name of the movement, to the whole classical music genre.

Mozart showed prodigious ability from his earliest childhood in Salzburg. Already competent on Keyboard and violin, he composed from the age of five and performed before European royalty; at 17 he was engaged as a court musician in Salzburg, but grew restless and travelled in search of a better position, always composing abundantly.

While visiting Vienna in 1781, he was dismissed from his Salzburg position. He chose to stay in the capital, where he achieved fame but little financial security. During his final years in Vienna, he composed many of his best-known symphonies, concertos, and operas, and the Requiem.

The circumstances of his early death have been much mythologized. For much of his life he was married to his wife, Constanze, and he also had two sons.

Mozart learned voraciously from others, and developed a brilliance and maturity of style that encompassed the light and graceful along with the dark and passionate. His influence on subsequent Western art music is profound.

Beethoven wrote his own early compositions in the shadow of Mozart, of whom Joseph Haydn wrote that "posterity will not see such a talent again in 100 years." Beethoven travelled to Vienna to study with Mozart but was recalled by his father succeeding his mother's death, and when Beethoven returned to Vienna some years later he discovered that his role model had died a young and impoverished death.

## Sergei Vasilievich Rachmaninoff



Rachmaninoff was born in 1873 in Semyonovo, near Veliky Novgorod, in north-western Russia. He was born into a noble family of Tatar descent, who had been in the service of the Russian tsars since the 16th century. His parents were both amateur pianists. When he was four, his mother gave him casual piano lessons, but it was his paternal grandfather, Arkady Alexandrovich Rachmaninoff, who brought Anna Ornatskaya, a teacher from Saint Petersburg, to teach Sergei in 1882. Ornatskaya remained for a few years, until the family home had to be sold to settle debts and the Rachmaninoff's moved to Moscow.

He found his education at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory, before learning under Nikolai Zverev. He met Tchaikovsky, and then Rachmaninoff arranged a suite of pieces from the Sleeping Beauty ballet for piano. Rachmaninoff's arrangement of Rimsky-Korsakov's "Flight of the Bumble-Bee," is also notoriously complex.

His first symphony was not very popular in Russia, even though the conductor Alexander Glazunov was probably to blame for the failure. Leo Tolstoy wasted no time in informing Rachmaninoff of his displeasure with Rachmaninoff's music, but he also disliked Beethoven, so what music he did like is very unclear.

Rachmaninoff's hard criticism ended at the premier of his Piano Concerto No.2, soon after which he became married.

The third piano concerto was composed for a tour of the USA in 1909, and was well-received at its premier in New York. Then the Leninist revolution in Russia forced Rachmaninoff to move to the US permanently. In the US he played many concerts whilst still being very relaxed. Vladimir Horowitz was the inspiration for the jazzy fourth, and final piano concerto, and they criticised each other but remained perfectly friendly until Rachmaninoff's death. Among his last works were the Symphonic Dances, the Third Symphony, and the Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini.

He sadly died of melanoma in Beverley Hills, California on the 28th of March 1943, at the height of World War II.

## Edvard Hagerup Grieg



Grieg worked very hard over the course of his 64 year life, and it is this work that justifies his position as Norway's flagship composer. Renowned for the Peer Gynt incidental music, and the majestic A minor piano concerto.

Born in Bergen, Norway, Grieg was originally taught by his mother from a young age, like Rachmaninoff. His education came from the Leipzig Conservatory, but he was not equipped with organ-playing skills which the conservatoire sought in it's piano students. He later met J.

P. E. Hartmann, a renowned Danish organ composer and Niels Gade.

Among many other accolades he was director of music of the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra. He also met Percy Grainger, the Australian-born arranger of folk music, and composer of light music.

He died in 1907, and it is said that 40,000 people marched through the streets of his home town to pay respect for him.