

Music at Midday
A Bach Concert



March 7, 2013
12 Noon

Program

Three Chorale Preludes

Deck thyself, my soul, with gladness
From God shall nought divide me
Christ, our Lord, to the Jordan came

Prelude and Fugue in Eb Major (15:00)

Coming Events

Sunday Evening Recital: April 14, 7:30 p.m.

Program Notes

Toward the end of his life, Bach assembled a number of works that he evidently considered to be his musical legacy, including chorale preludes whose sheer length would have made them inappropriate to their liturgical purpose—simply announcing a hymn—but which display Bach’s genius at working out the compositional possibilities of a given chorale theme.

The chorale prelude on “Deck thyself, my soul, with gladness” employs an elaborated fragment of the chorale melody for the underlying accompanimental motive.



The chorale prelude on “From God shall nought divide me” presents the chorale melody in the pedal under an elaborate accompaniment in the manuals.



The chorale prelude on “Christ our Lord to the Jordan came” sandwiches the chorale melody in between a two-part counterpoint in the right hand and a running bass pattern in the left hand.



The Prelude in Eb Major is one of Bach’s longest organ preludes, along with the Toccata in F Major. Several elements have identified this work with the Holy Trinity: the key signature of three flats, the three themes in the prelude, and three themes in the accompanying fugue. The first theme has the majestic character of a French overture, employed for the entrance of the king.



This main theme alternates with two secondary themes.



The colossal fugue is Bach's greatest creation in this form for organ. The main theme, known as St. Anne because of its resemblance to that hymn tune, is developed in a complex five-voice texture (four voices in the manuals, the fifth in the pedal).



Bach continues with a second fugue subject, which he eventually combines with the first.



Completing the "trinity" is a third fugue subject, which Bach also combines with the main subject.



The conclusion of this fugue has been described as "the grandest ending to any fugue in music."