
LAWO
CLASSICS
BACH
KÅRE NORDSTOGA
THE SILBERMANN ORGAN
OF ST. GEORGENKIRCHE
IN RÖTHA
BACH
ORGAN WORKS

NORDSTOGA'S FINALE

With this recording, Kåre Nordstoga brings his monumental project of recording Bach's complete organ works to a close. The final album does not consist of leftover pieces, but rather of a carefully curated selection drawn from across Bach's entire opus. From the first recording session in 2009, the project has grown into 14 gleaming silver discs containing music of pure gold!

On the choice of works, he has this to say. 'What constitutes Bach's complete works is not easy to define, and this release does not attempt to gather every single marginal work. I have taken the liberty of relying on my own judgement when it comes to the more peripheral corners of this enormous collection.'

In this final release, we are taken back to Bach's school years in Lüneburg, where the teenage prodigy astonished his teachers. We meet the young Arnstadt organist as he composes in the temperamental North German tradition, while also trying his hand at the Italian style. We hear how French court music inspired the Weimar organist. And with the great Prelude in E minor, Nordstoga takes us to one of Bach's organ recitals from his Leipzig years.

Prelude and Fugue in E minor BWV 533:
Possibly composed in Arnstadt in 1704, the work is firmly rooted in the North German tradition, combining toccata writing, pedal solos, and powerful chords. These elements also find their way into this fugue, and the musical language is, by Bach's standards, simple and direct.

The work has acquired the nicknames 'little' and 'cathedral'. The repeated notes in the fugue subject, resembling a horn call, have given rise to the nickname *The Watchman.*

Aria variata alla maniera italiana BWV 989:
Some may be surprised to find a cembalo work included in Kåre Nordstoga's monumental organ project. Nordstoga himself offers the following explanation: 'I permit myself this liberty because this is the last recording, and the galant Italian style forms an agreeable contrast to the substantial works in E minor.'

Nordstoga is not the first to perform this *aria* on the organ, and some of its passages span such a wide range that the use of pedals comes naturally. This suggests that it may have been written for a pedal cembalo, a type of instrument widely used at the time both as a domestic practice instrument and in concert settings. (The great *Passacaglia* BWV 582 may have been composed for a pedal cembalo).

The theme is presented, as in the suite form, in two sections, both of which are repeated, and the same structure is followed in all ten variations. The work dates from around 1709 and was copied into the *Andreas-Bach-Buch*, a collection containing works by numerous German, French and Italian composers. Most of the entries were probably made between 1700 and 1719 by Johann Sebastian's elder brother, Johann Christoph.

In this work, the 24-year-old Johann Sebastian explores the Italian ornamental style. It was a style he had first encountered as a boy, when he surreptitiously borrowed one of his elder brother's music books and copied it by night!

Prelude and Fugue in E minor BWV 548:
A few years after Bach began his work in Leipzig, he composed several grand-scale works. *The St Matthew Passion* was performed on Good Friday 1727, and this towering organ work, lasting around fifteen minutes, was composed at roughly the same time. It exceeds the bounds of a church service, and the Leipzig Cantor was not, in any case, the church's organist. As an organ consultant, he travelled throughout the region, inspecting repairs and new instruments by putting them to the test in a virtuoso recital.

The work is conceived in a concerto-like style, with contrasting ritornellos and episodes. The fugue theme unfolds in progressively wider intervals, expanding from a third to a sixth, which has given rise to the nickname *The Wedge*. The conclusion of the three-part fugue is a da capo repetition of the opening section.

Bach biographer Philipp Spitta referred to the work as 'an organ symphony in two movements, to give an adequate idea of its grandeur and power.'

Fantasy and Fugue in C minor BWV 562:
The unique five-part texture reveals the influence of a French work that Bach had copied in Weimar, *Livre d'Orgue* by Nicolas de Grigny (1699). However, it was probably not until his final years in Leipzig that Bach composed his towering Fantasy in C minor, a key that has always been associated with sorrow and drama. The opening theme is repeated frequently; 44 times in the course of 81 bars, and with increasing intensity

According to the Swedish Bach expert Hans Fagius, the work is 'an étude in appoggiaturas and trills'.

Fugue on a Theme by Giovanni Legrenzi BWV 574: As a young man, Bach devoted himself to mastering the art of the fugue, a discipline he pursued throughout his life, and a series of early independent fugues emerged from that endeavour. As Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach said of his father: 'Already in his youth he developed into a pure and powerful *Fugist*.'

The title refers to a Venetian composer, and the work was entered into the *Andreas-Bach-Buch* around 1705. It has since been shown that this spirited theme actually derives from a sonata by another Venetian composer, Giovanni Bononcini (1672). The use of two fugue subjects makes this one of the earliest double fugues in the organ repertoire.

Pièce d'Orgue (Fantasy in G major) BWV 572:
The title and the tempo markings *très vitement* and *gravement* point to France, perhaps to François Couperin. It opens with sparkling, virtuosic arpeggio figures on the manuals, at a *very rapid tempo*, followed by the majestic and *weighty gravement* middle section, rich in modulation. The work then concludes with new passagework, as at the beginning, but now *lentement, slowly.*

This unusual early work was probably composed in Weimar. Alongside its French inspirations, Bach undoubtedly still carried vivid memories of his visit to Buxtehude in 1705–06 and of the composer's powerful style

Fugue in C minor BWV 575:
Bach may have composed a prelude, now lost, to precede the *perpetuum mobile* flow of whirling sixteenth notes in the manuals and the concluding pedal section. And perhaps it was written as early as his time in Lüneburg – by a composer only fifteen or sixteen years old!

The figuration, so characteristic of the North German style, unmistakably foreshadows the composer's later achievements, above all the celebrated fugue in D minor, BWV565

Prelude and Fugue in C minor BWV 549:
This is one of Bach's earliest free organ works, originally in D minor in a manuscript dating from around 1706. It therefore dates from the early years of Bach's first organist post in Arnstadt, before the formative journey that took him to Buxtehude in Lübeck.

Nordstoga sets the final track in motion with footwork, opening with a virtuosic pedal solo. The figuration is then elaborated in an improvisatory *stylus phantasticus* manner, generating a harmonic process articulated by forceful chordal writing.

The energetic fugue is largely manualiter and concludes with a brief toccata. It recalls the opening, with virtuosic figuration building to a climax in jubilant C major.

Torkil Baden

Read more in Torkil Baden: *Bach and his organ universe.* Lyche Musikkforlag 2021

KÅRE NORDSTOGA — ORGEL

Kåre Nordstoga (b. 1954) studied at the Norwegian Academy of Music under Søren Gangflot, Bjørn Boysen and Kaare Ørnung, among others. Following his debut concert in 1978, he continued his studies under David Sanger in London, and he was for a time organist at Ullern Church, before being appointed assistant organist at Oslo Cathedral in 1984. He has also been associated with the Norwegian Academy of Music, where he was appointed professor in 1994 – the same year that he became Cathedral Organist at Oslo Cathedral.

At the Cathedral, Nordstoga frequently performed a wide musical repertoire, including two popular concert series of Bach's complete organ works. His recordings include the organ music of Bach, Brahms, Franck, Widor, and Liszt, all of Bach's violin sonatas recorded on the cathedral's chancel organ in collaboration with violinist Geir Inge Lotsberg, as well as several recordings of Norwegian organ music. He retired as a cathedral organist by the end of 2024.

Nordstoga is an active concert organist. In recent years he has been soloist with the symphony orchestras of Oslo, Bergen, and Trondheim, and he has been invited to organ festivals abroad, including Aarhus, Notre Dame in Paris, and Musashino Cultural Center in Tokyo. He has released several solo recordings and has participated in several other releases. As a highly valued accompanist and soloist, he regularly collaborates with some of Norway's best-known musicians and is invited to give solo performances on the largest and most renowned organs in Europe.

In 2006 he was awarded the Lindeman Prize for his active contribution to musical life inside and outside of the Church. In 2016 Nordstoga was appointed by His Majesty The King of Norway as a Knight (first class) of the Royal Norwegian Order of St Olaf for his contribution to Norwegian church music.



ORGAN DESCRIPTION
ST. GEORGENKIRCHE RÖTHA

The organ in the Georgenkirche, Rötha, is one of the few surviving Silbermann organs preserved in an almost completely authentic state. When Gottfried Silbermann (1683–1753) built the instrument in 1721, it was examined and approved by, among others, Johannes Kuhnau, who was then Thomaskantor (Cantor of St. Thomas) in Leipzig, before Johann Sebastian Bach took over the position in 1723. The Georgenkirche organ later became famous when Felix Mendelssohn played it in the 1840s and praised its qualities: "Das ist ein Silberklang, herrlich und wunderbar" ("That is a silvery sound, glorious and wonderful" — a play on Silbermann's name).

The organ has two manual divisions fully equipped with flue stops, but lacking reed stops, while the organ's two reed stops are instead combined in a small pedal division. Despite having only 23 stops, the organ produces a full-bodied, powerful organ sound and stands as a brilliant example of the advanced art of organ building in the 18th century.

(MANUAL I)
Bordun 16'
Principal 8'
Rohrflöte 8'
Quintadena 8'
Octava 4'
Spitzflöte 4'
Quinta 3'
Octava 2'
Mixtur 3-4 ranks
Cornet 3 ranks (from c1)

OBERWERK (MANUAL II)
Principal 4'
Gedackt 8'
Quintadena 8'
Rohrflöte 4'
Nasat 3'
Octava 2'
Tertia 1 3/5'
Quinta 1 1/2'
Sifflet 1'
Mixtur 3 ranks

PEDAL
Principalbaß 16'
Posaune 16'
Trompete 8'

COUPLERS
Manual coupler (II/I)
Pedal coupler (I/Ped)
Tremulant

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)

Prelude and Fugue in E minor, BWV 533
01. Prelude__02:32
02. Fugue__03:17

Aria variata alla maniera italiana in A minor, BWV 989
03. Thema__01:24
04. Variation I: Largo__01:00
05. Variation II__00:59
06. Variation III__01:02
07. Variation IV: Allegro__01.05
08. Variation V: Un poco allegro__00:51
09. Variation VI: Andante__01:09
10. Variation VII: Un poco allegro__00:46
11. Variation VIII: Allegro__01:16
12. Variation IX__01:39
13. Variation X__01:24

Prelude and Fugue in E minor, BWV 548
14. Prelude__07:11
15. Fuga__08:10

16. Fantasia in C minor, BWV 562__05:10

17. Fugue on a Theme by Giovanni Legrenzi, BWV 574__07:33

18. Pièce d'orgue in G major, BWV 572__09:12

19. Fugue in C minor, BWV 575__05:20

Prelude and Fugue in C minor, BWV 549
20. Prelude__02:19
21. Fugue__04:07

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