

St. Joseph Catholic Church

Organ Recital

05 April 2020 - Palm Sunday

Jerome Cole

Prelude in E minor, BWV 533.a .....	J. S. Bach (1685-1750)
O Mensch, beweine deine Sünde groß, BWV 622.....	J. S. Bach
<i>Premier Livre d'Orgue</i> (1699): <i>La Messe</i> .....	Nicolas de Grigny (1672-1703)
1. Kyrie en taille à 5	
Wir glauben all' an einen Gott, Vater, BWV 740.....	Attributed to Johann L. Krebs
Fugue in E minor, BWV 533.b.....	J. S. Bach

### Program Notes

J.S. Bach's **Prelude and Fugue in E minor (BWV 533)** is probably an early work, possibly written after his time with Georg Bohm in Lüneburg (1700-1702). Dissonant harmonies and suspensions permeate both the prelude and fugue, providing the basis for unifying themes, and are possibly reminiscent of the *durezza e ligature* style exemplified by the Italian Frescobaldi, which shows already on Bach's part a disposition to, and interaction with, the cosmopolitan, and shows a composer well on his way to greatness, though in this piece seen on a scale smaller than his mature works (which you will hear on during the Triduum).

The opening flourish presents and grounds the piece firmly in e minor through a series of question and answer style *suspirans* figures. Peter Hurford explains that, "The *suspirans*, or 'breathing' figure, is so called because it starts with the sensation of a quick breath. Sometimes the 'breath' is literal, taking the form of a rest" (Peter Hurford, *Making Music on the Organ*, p. 96), as is the case at the very start of this piece. The opening section ends with a cadence on the subdominant, A minor, and proceeds into a section of "*pesante* chords" (Peter Williams, *The Organ Music of J.S. Bach*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, p. 46), featuring first suspensions in the pedal, with the suspended note always being the 7<sup>th</sup> of the 4/2 chord, and the resolution being achieved through an escape tone, a figure which foreshadows the countersubject of the fugue. Next is a section of dominant chords with the suspended note in the soprano either as the 4<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup>. The last section features the suspended note in the alto, alternately viewed as part of a dim7 chord or as the 9<sup>th</sup> of a dominant 7<sup>th</sup> resolving to the tonic before resolving the dominant sonority. The rhetoric has continued through this section as a dialogue between the tied long notes and the *pesante* chords. The whole prelude is quite riveting and, as Williams says, "The harmony is not sophisticated but the rhetoric is faultless" (Ibid, 47).

The fugue is in four [or possibly 5] voices, but as with Bach's early fugues (531, 549a) (see Williams, 47), the number of entries is 5. See if you can memorize the subject and count all 5 entries! The pedal does not enter until the 5<sup>th</sup> entry (maybe not originally meant for pedal?) and comes in on the super-tonic. It is unclear whether the want to provide a real as opposed to tonal answer necessitated the harmonic area of b minor (tonal answer would have given e minor), or vice versa. Either way, an episodic passage immediately follows, in which several common techniques are used: the semiquavers of the first measure of the episode hearken back to the opening *suspirans* figures of the Prelude; accompanying these 16<sup>th</sup> notes are 8<sup>th</sup> notes which are playing the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the subject in inversion (adjusted for tonality); next is a sequence where the counter subject (falling 4<sup>th</sup> in 16<sup>th</sup> notes followed by a half-step rise to a quarter note), in the upper voice is accompanied by a chromatic scale up a tetrachord. The return of the subject begins a section which hearkens back to the *pesante* section of the prelude by accompanying the subject with full chords, imitating both the rhythm and harmony of the prelude, and providing strong harmonic and rhythmic drive. This is a very unified prelude and fugue pair, both in rhetorical idea and motivic structure, and in harmonic and rhythmic ideas.

**O Mensch, beweine dein Sünde groß, BWV 622**, is one of only two chorale preludes in the *Orgelbüchlein* set in the florid style, a style perhaps well suited to the affect of the text of the passion hymn written by S. Heyden and published in 1525 (Williams, 279):

O Man, weep for your great sin,  
For which Christ left his father's bosom  
And came to earth;  
Of a Virgin pure and gentle  
He was born here for us;  
To become the mediator.  
He gave life to the dead  
And banished all sickness,  
Until the time came on  
That he should be sacrificed,  
Bearing the heavy burden of our sins  
Long on the cross.

The melody was written by M. Greitter in 1525 (Williams, 279), and, despite the coloratura nature of the writing, Bach does indeed usually place the melody note on the beat, which may (or may not!) aid you in following the chorale. This setting provides wonderful opportunity for contemplation of the Redemption, and, in addition to the text of the hymn, one might be moved by the text from Philippians:

Have among yourselves the same attitude  
that is also yours in Christ Jesus,  
Who, though he was in the form of God,  
did not regard equality with God something to be grasped.  
Rather, he emptied himself,

taking the form of a slave,  
coming in human likeness;  
and found human in appearance,  
he humbled himself,  
becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.  
Because of this, God greatly exalted him  
and bestowed on him the name  
that is above every name,  
that at the name of Jesus  
every knee should bend,  
of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
and every tongue confess that  
Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

Though remaining in the Baroque period, we turn to a different country, France, and the first movement, *Kyrie, of the Mass from de Grigny's Livre d'Orgue*. You are probably already familiar with the text of the Kyrie:

Lord have mercy,  
Christ have mercy,  
Lord have mercy,

a text which is appropriately Lenten. The melody, taken from the Gregorian Mass IV, is in the tenor range, played in long notes on reeds in the pedal division. This was typical of the period at that time in France when, for large Masses in Cathedrals, the organ would play in “*alternatum*” with the choir, and Mass IV was the typical Mass used. There was a highly formalized system in place for writing an organ Mass in this period in France, partly allowed by the uniform design of the organ. The first piece in a “set” was usually a “*Plein Jeu*,” in which the melody was played in the pedal with a principal chorus in the manuals providing the backdrop of a broad, stately march, elegant in style, yet pungent and affective in harmony. You can almost imagine this as the entrance of a king: slow, firm, stately, grounded, broad, powerful, and magnificent.

Our fourth piece today brings us back to Germany, but teetering between the Baroque and Classical periods: **Wir glauben all' an einen Gott, Vater, BWV 740**, originally attributed to Bach, but now thought to be by his student, Johann Krebs. The text of this hymn is by T. Clausnitzer, based on Luther's Nicene Creed (Williams, 486):

We all believe in one God,  
Father, Son and Holy Ghost,  
Whom the band of Cherubim  
And host of angels glorify,  
Who through his great power

Accomplishes, does and creates all.

The composer used the time-honored technique of fore-imitation, in which each phrase of the chorale is preceded by a section in which the accompanying voices foreshadow the melody, usually using imitative techniques, each voice providing its own statement of the idea. The particularly fascinating aspect of this piece is that it is in five voices, and demands that the player use both feet at the same time, an unusual technique. The lilting character of the accompaniment and harmony both point to the coming classical era of music, and the melisma at the coda is exquisite. I believe I included this piece in a Lenten recital more for its pleading affect than for the text of the hymn.

### **Biography**

Having entered undergraduate studies at Ave Maria University with the intention to study physics, Jerome Cole completed his studies in both physics and music, studying organ under Dr. Brice Gerlach. He earned his Master's from the IU Jacob's School of Music in 2018, studying Organ Performance with Dr. Christopher Young and Dr. Janette Fishell, and Improvisation with Prof. Vincent Carr. Jerome is currently Director of Sacred Music at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Mishawaka, IN, and adjunct professor at Holy Cross College, ND, IN, where he directs the Liturgical Choir and leads music for weekly Sunday Mass. In his leisure time Jerome enjoys reading, camping, running, and cycling.