



THEARTOFBACH

ANDERSON & ROE PIANO DUO



STEINWAY & SONS

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Greg Anderson & Elizabeth Joy Roe, pianists

Augustin Hadelich, guest violin soloist

- 1 *Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit*, BWV 106 "Actus tragicus": I. Sonatina in E flat major
(arr. piano, four-hands by György Kurtág) 2:30

Concerto for 2 Harpsichords in C major, BWV 1061

- 2 I. Allegro 7:07
- 3 II. Adagio ovvero Largo 5:52
- 4 III. Fuga. Vivace 5:04

Saint Matthew Passion, BWV 244 — Suite for 2 Pianos (arr. Anderson & Roe)

- 5 *Aria: Erbarme dich, mein Gott* 6:09
- 6 *Chorale: Wie wunderbarlich ist doch diese Strafe!* 1:01
- 7 *Aria: Aus Liebe will mein Heiland sterben* 4:57
- 8 *Chorale: O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden* 1:03
- 9 *Aria: Mache dich, mein Herze, rein* 5:40

The Art of Fugue, BWV 1080

- 10 **Contrapunctus IX, a 4 alla Duodecima** 2:23
- 11 **Contrapunctus XIIIa, Fuga a 2 Clav.** 2:17
- 12 **Contrapunctus XIIIb, Alio Modo. Fuga a 2 Clav.** 2:22

- 13 **Canons on the Ground from the "Goldberg Variations", BWV 1087: 12, 6, 10, 11, 14** 3:07

- 14 ***Die Seele ruht in Jesu Händen* from the Cantata *Herr Jesu Christ, wahr' Mensch und Gott*, BWV 127**
(arr. violin and two pianos by Anderson & Roe) 8:58
Violin Solo: Augustin Hadelich

- 15 ***Schafe können sicher weiden* (Sheep May Safely Graze) from *Was mir behagt, ist nur die muntre Jagd!*,
BWV 208 "Hunt Cantata" (arr. 2 pianos by Mary Howe) 4:48**

Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G major, BWV 1048 (arr. piano, four-hands by Max Reger)

- 16 **I. Allegro con spirito** 5:05
- 17 **II. Adagio** 1:31
- 18 **III. Allegro** 4:19

Playing Time: 74:14

THE ART OF BACH

Johann Sebastian Bach is universally considered the exemplar of the Baroque era, if not the ultimate composer for the ages. Through this synoptic intermix of sacred, secular, and scholarly works, we aim to present a complete portrait of Bach, the master and man, and showcase the extraordinary range of his compositional output. Here we juxtapose original and reimagined versions of his music, reframing Bach's art in a modern context while underscoring its timeless vitality, profundity, and power. Moreover, the reciprocity of duo pianism unveils unexpected and intriguing dimensions—from the conversational and intimate to the adversarial and epic—within Bach's legendary compositions, a further reminder of the elastic yet unwavering authenticity of his creative voice.

TRANSCRIPTIONS

"[Bach] was one of the most prolific arrangers of his own and other pieces, especially as organist. From him I learnt to recognize the truth that Good and Great Universal Music remains the same through whatever medium it is sounded. But also the second truth, that different mediums each have a different language (their own) in which this music again sounds somewhat differently." —*Ferruccio Busoni*

Bach seemed aware that his music transcended the constraints of instrumentation. At times he carefully recycled his own works, the Third Brandenburg Concerto among them, reusing old material to craft new works for distinct combinations of instruments. In other instances, he was deliberately vague about his music's intended orchestration, as is the case with *The Art of Fugue* and the *Canons on the Goldberg Ground*. One can imagine Bach in his studio hearing these works dictated by the voice of God and performed by archangels; we mortals, of course, must uncover his music's most intimate secrets through the limits of our plebeian, earthly instruments. Still, there is a certain delight to encountering performances of these works on different instruments, as each new configuration can shed light on unexpected characteristics and musical details.

In "The Art of Bach," we aspire to treat Bach's definitive output with both reverence and festivity, crafting a collection that reveals the singular brilliance of his keyboard compositions, his inspiration upon twentieth-century visionaries like Reger and Kurtág, and his influence upon ourselves as pianists and arrangers. We have curated a series of transcriptions that honor the spirit of the original pieces, while also offering unique and viable perspectives. Alongside these arrangements, we've recorded (on two pianos) the complete works Bach composed for two harpsichords alone (the *Concerto in C major* and a revised version of the Contrapunctus XIII from *The Art of Fugue* appendix) as well as a few works for which Bach did not assign specific instrumentation.

SECULAR MUSIC

Much of Bach's secular music was written during his years (1717-1723) as a music director for Prince Leopold in Cöthen. Since the prince was a Calvinist, Bach was not required to compose church-oriented music; instead, he wrote a great deal of instrumental works during this period, in a style that incorporated the fashionable musical trends of the era, including dance rhythms and *fortspinnung* (a compositional process in which a musical motif is developed through the use of sequences and repetition, a literal "spinning-forth"). In these secular pieces, Bach emerges as a man of robust ambition and energy, an artist fully capable of applying the high ideals of creativity to the temporal realm of social and professional responsibility.

Bach wrote over a dozen concertos for single or multiple harpsichords, though nearly all are arrangements of his own concertos for other instruments. In fact, only two concertos originated as keyboard works: the famous *Italian Concerto* for solo harpsichord and the **Concerto for Two Harpsichords in C major** [tracks 2-4]. Interestingly, both are also the only concertos Bach scored without orchestral accompaniment. While instrumental forces were later added to the outer movements of the C major concerto, this addition was unlikely created by Bach himself.

This virtuosic Concerto for Two Harpsichords (BWV 1061) is strikingly contrapuntal. Throughout the keyboards are interlocked in an antiphonal dialogue, which lends the work considerable drama and vibrancy. Canonic interweavings permeate the Italianate slow movement, and the finale takes the shape of a boisterous six-voiced fugue.

In 1721 Bach composed a set of six *concerti grossi* for the Margrave Christian Ludwig of Brandenburg. The third of these so-called "**Brandenburg Concertos**" was orchestrated for three violins, three violas, and three cellos, plus continuo. In this arrangement [tracks

16-18] by the twentieth-century composer Max Reger, four hands on a single keyboard must encompass all of the parts, unleashing a formidable challenge for the pianists and a healthy dose of adrenaline for listeners.

Following the *ritornello* back-and-forth of the dazzling opening movement, the second movement (in both the original version and Reger's arrangement) features a mere two chords outlining a Phrygian half cadence. This spareness yields a conundrum for performers—some choose to cut-and-paste a slow movement from another of Bach's works while others improvise a cadenza to fill the space. We were inspired by both approaches: our improvised cadenza encases a hidden musical quotation. Following this mystery movement, the concerto concludes with another fugue, this time in the form of a whirling gigue.

Also befitting this category is the beloved "**Sheep May Safely Graze**" [track 14], a movement from one of Bach's early cantatas. The piece is now celebrated for its heavenly grace, but in a rather amusing twist, it was originally composed as a secular piece of dinner theater, or *Tafelmusik*, for the birthday of Duke Christian of Saxe-Weissenfels. The music is appropriately pastoral in nature with lyrics presenting a tableau of sheep placidly grazing (the duke's people) under the vigilance of a good shepherd (the duke himself), though it is difficult not to interpret these lyrics from a religious standpoint as well. Composer and pianist Mary Howe adapted the piece multiple times in the 1930s: for solo piano, piano duet, and two pianos.

SCHOLARLY MUSIC

Bach's overtly learned works, such as *The Art of Fugue*, were out-of-step with his time. Motivated by creative drive and zeal (especially in his later years), Bach pushed the "antiquated" rules of contrapuntal composition to supreme heights, always staying true to his own acute intellect and uncompromising ideals.

As a master of form, Bach had the uncanny ability to spin rigorous mathematical structures into music of remarkable ingenuity and artistry. His compositional “games” feature melodies that twist, fold, stretch, flip, reverse, and layer upon themselves according to strict compositional rules, and the scores leave many a theorist’s jaw on the floor; there has been no finer virtuoso of such contrapuntal finesse! Casual listeners, on the other hand, are free to admire the sheer beauty of these pieces, for regardless of the complex processes governing their structure, they undoubtedly are sterling works of art.

The exciting and bold **Contrapunctus IX** from *The Art of Fugue* [track 10] features a double fugue in which two subjects occur dependently and in invertible counterpoint at the 12th. The mirror fugues that follow [tracks 11-12] are actually a single fugue played twice: once normally and then again with the voices completely inverted, without violating contrapuntal rules or sacrificing musicality. In other words, the treble voice in **Contrapunctus XIIIa** is later heard upside-down and in the bass in **Contrapunctus XIIIb**! When creating this version for two keyboards, Bach added an additional line in both versions that freely comments on the surrounding musical dialogue.

The lesser known **Canons from the Goldberg Ground** [track 13] are based on the first eight bass notes of the legendary *Goldberg Variations*. Five of the fourteen canons are programmed on this album, each of which employs stunning contrapuntal gymnastics. For example, **Canon No. 11** is something of a puzzle: the cross can be found in a variety of guises, both musically and graphically within the notation itself, symbolizing the inscription Bach himself inserted: “Christ will crown those who carry His cross.”

SACRED MUSIC

As an organist and cantor, sacred music was naturally a major part of Bach’s repertory, with the Lutheran liturgy informing many of his greatest compositions. These works examine the

pangs of human suffering as well as the uplift of spiritual glory, juxtaposing mortality and eternity to overwhelming effect.

If his deeply devotional religious works are any indication, Bach seemed in direct communion with the divine, as heard in ***Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit*** (“God’s time is the best time”). Twentieth-century composer György Kurtág created this simple yet poignant duet transcription of the opening movement [track 1] to perform with his wife, Márta. Significantly, the *primo* part is performed nearly entirely with overlapping arms, creating a visual representation of the cross for audience members.

Composed for the final Sunday before Lent, ***Die Seele ruht in Jesu Händen*** (“The soul rests in Jesus’ hands”) explores the complex emotions one may experience in the face of death; the text reflects a peaceful spiritual assuredness while the music conveys a profound sense of sorrow. In our arrangement, we assigned the vocal melody to solo violin (performed eloquently here by Augustin Hadelich); the two pianos imitate an oboe line and tolling death bells, creating a spacious sonority that bridges the gap between earth and heaven.

The ***St. Matthew Passion*** is one of our favorite works of all time; the simple desire to play this sublime composition ourselves compelled us to reimagine it for two pianos. Depicting the final sufferings and crucifixion of Jesus Christ, this piece is surely one of the most impressive examples of Christian artwork. In creating this transcription, we have carefully selected five movements from the original work: together they retain the dramatic arch of the story. The three arias—one each for solo alto, soprano, and bass, respectively—are in actuality duets of equal partnership between the vocal soloists and obbligato instruments, and the counterpoint translates especially well to the two-piano medium.

Structurally, both the original work and this arrangement follow Martin Luther’s “A Meditation on Christ’s Passion,” written in 1519. Luther first asks the believer to repent his own guilt and

show remorse, as expressed by the anguished tears in **“Erbarme dich, mein Gott”** (“Have Mercy, My Lord”) [track 5]. Then the believer must truly appreciate two important hallmarks of the Christ story: Jesus suffered for our sins—heard in the chorals, **“Wie wunderbarlich ist doch diese Strafe!”** (“How amazing is this punishment!”) [track 6] and **“O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden”** (“O head, full of blood and wounds”) [track 8]—and that Jesus’ love will conquer all: **“Aus Liebe will mein Heiland sterben”** (“Out of love my Savior is willing to die”) [track 7], an utterly transcendent aria sung as Jesus is dying on the cross. Having undertaken these stages, the believer can finally and fully accept Christ into his life and live according to Christ’s example: **“Mache dich, mein Herze, rein”** (“Make yourself pure, my heart”) [track 9].

Audiences of these sacred transcriptions, however, are free to give the works new meaning. Without lyrics or a miscellany of instruments, the music is pared to its purest essence, emerging with an abstract potency. The pianos’ monochromatic sonority and clarity of attack highlight the harmonic complexities within the music; the impassioned dissonances and pleading appoggiaturas become even more palpable. Words are no longer necessary: the music speaks for itself.

A TRANSCENDENT ART

Bach may have mastered—and, in retrospect, defined—the aforementioned styles of Baroque composition, but we would assert that his music ultimately transcends categorization. Though highly accomplished and prolific during his lifetime, he was not a slave to popular opinion and fads. He followed his own inner creative path, and this artistic independence and integrity allowed his genius to flourish. At the crux of his art resides a powerful conviction, an absolute quality; his music has therefore remained immune to the oxidation of time. As Albert Schweitzer once proclaimed: “Bach is thus a terminal point. Nothing comes from him; everything merely leads to him.” The art of Bach remains infinitely resonant, awe-inspiring, and *sui generis*.

—*Greg Anderson & Elizabeth Joy Roe*

The **Anderson and Roe Piano Duo** is revolutionizing the classical piano experience for the 21st century. Hailed as “the most dynamic duo of this generation” (*San Francisco Classical Voice*) and “the intense synchronization of genius” (*ThirdCoast Digest*), Greg Anderson & Elizabeth Joy Roe have captivated audiences around the world with their adrenalized performances, notorious music videos, and inventive transcriptions. Their previous albums on the Steinway Label, *When Words Fade* and *An Amadeus Affair*, were released to critical acclaim and spent dozens of weeks on the Billboard Classical Charts, while their Emmy-nominated, self-produced music videos have been viewed by millions on YouTube.

Since forming their dynamic musical partnership in 2002 as students at The Juilliard School, Anderson & Roe have toured extensively as recitalists and orchestral soloists across North America, Asia, and Europe. They have appeared on NPR’s *All Things Considered* and *From the Top*, APM’s *Performance Today*, BBC Radio’s *In Tune*, and MTV’s *Total Request Live*. In recognition of their singular vision for the advancement of classical music, they have been invited to present at numerous international leader symposiums, including the EG (Entertainment Gathering), Imagine Solutions Conference, Chicago Ideas Week, and Mexico’s Think Tank Festival for Brilliant Minds. A performance by the Anderson & Roe Piano Duo was handpicked to appear on the *Sounds of Juilliard* CD celebrating the school’s centenary.

Their scores are published by Alfred Music on the “Anderson & Roe Duos & Duets Series” and by Awkward Fermata Press.

Anderson & Roe’s mission—to make classical music a relevant and powerful force in society—inspires everything they do as artists, from their performances, compositions, and recordings, to their videos, writings, and social media presence. As the *American Record Guide* recently stated, “[T]here is an overriding joy in their music-making. Couple that with incredible technical abilities, ensemble second to none, and, in their videos, a true sense of theatrical entertainment, and you have a positive look at the future of classical music performance. They do have it all, and any classical music lover owes it to himself to hear Anderson & Roe.”



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