



Darkness into Light

A Meditation on Chorale Preludes by Johann Sebastian Bach

David Buice, Organist

Faith Lutheran Church

Sunday, April 28, 2024 at 3:00 p.m.

Darkness into Light

A Meditation on Chorale Preludes of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Program

Advent: *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*
Chorale

Organ Chorale in *style brisé*, BWV 599

Christmas: *Puer natus in Bethlehem*
Chorale

Organ Chorale, BWV 603

In dulci jubilo, BWV 729

New Year's Eve: *Das alte Jahre vergangen ist*
Chorale

Organ Chorale with ornamented melody, BWV 614

New Year's Day: *In dir ist Freude*
Chorale

Chorale Fantasia, BWV 615

Dance

Lent: *Herzlich tut mich verlangen*, BWV 727

Easter: *Christ lag in Todesbanden*, BWV 625

Pentecost: *Komm, Gott Schoepfer, heiliger Geist* (2 verses), BWV 667

Trinity: *Wir glauben all' an einen Gott*, BWV 740

Confession & Repentance: *Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir*, BWV 686

Death: *Alle Menschen müssen sterben*
Chorale

Organ Chorale, BWV 643

Eternal Life: *O Lamm Gottes, unschuldig* (3 verses), BWV 656

Darkness into Light: *Vor deinen Thron tret' ich*, BWV 668

~

Organ by The Pipe Organ Foundation, Mercer Island, Washington, 2022

Tonal finishing by Aaron Reichert, Staunton, Virginia

Program Notes

The music on this program reflects the relative states of darkness and light in the church year and in the faithful life. A progression, from ignorance to illumination or enlightenment, is repeated through the major seasons of the church year. Advent leads to Christmas, Lent leads to Easter, and we move from a limited realization of God to the fullness of the Trinity at Pentecost. There is a sense of regret for past shortcomings moving to hope for the future at the New Year, and a sense of the burden of sin "lightened" through confession and repentance. Finally, there is the movement from life, through the dark and mysterious portal of death, to the everlasting light of eternal life and our appearance before the throne of God.

Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland (Savior of the Nations, Come): The chorale is austere, reflecting the grim condition of the world before the appearance of Christ. The organ chorale uses the harpsichordist's "broken style" (*style brisé*) technique to portray a mounting urgency for salvation as well as the faith that lets us "step out" as believers, as Peter stepped out of the boat to meet Christ on the water.

Puer natus in Bethlehem (A Child is Born in Bethlehem): Descending figures in the pedal line symbolize Christ's coming from heaven to earth at the Nativity. In the organ chorale, celestial voices join Mary's in a rocking lullaby to the baby Jesus, while angel wings gently fan the air.

In dulci jubilo (Good Christian Friends, Rejoice): The quiet of the night is shattered by the brilliance of the angels' appearance to the shepherds. (This type of hymn playing may have frequently gotten Bach into trouble with the church fathers in his early organist days, as he goes into virtuosic flights of fancy between phrases of the hymn, making it virtually impossible for the congregation to know when to sing!)

Das alte Jahre vergangen ist (The Old Year is Passed Away): Mourning of a year at its close, regret over things not accomplished or mistakes made, are portrayed by the somberness of the chorale and by the chromaticism and ornamentation in the organ chorale that follows.

In dir ist Freude (In Thee is Joy): Hope for the New Year is sung simply in the chorale, and then boisterously celebrated by the organ as it imitates the ringing of steeple bells on New Year's Day. The triptych ends with a dance version of the chorale (the tune was an Italian balletto before Luther turned it into a hymn) as the revels continue.

Herzlich tut mich verlangen (My Heart is Filled with Longing): Grief over Christ's sacrifice is heard in the chromatic accompaniment and expressively ornamented melody of the *Passion Chorale*. The piece ends on the harmonic dominant rather than the tonic, reflecting the incompleteness and uncertainty felt by the disciples after Jesus' death on the cross.

Christ lag in Todesbanden (Christ Lay in the bonds of Death): The opening phrase portrays Christ in the tomb, while the remainder of the hymn rejoices in His resurrection, something along the lines of a Lutheran *Low in the Grave He Lay/Up from the Grave He Arose*. Accordingly, the opening phrase is played with a quiet registration (a somewhat unearthly, ghostly sound), followed by an increasingly strengthened voice for the remainder of the hymn, all the way to the "Alleluia!"

Komm, Gott Schoepfer, heiliger Geist (Come, God Creator, Holy Ghost): Two views of Pentecost, first that of the spectators who believed the apostles to be drunk (hear how the pedal plays off the beat, the music lurching and stumbling from cadence to cadence), then that of the apostles themselves, as they are caught up in the spirit, the tongues of fire surging up and down from heaven to earth and back again, our lines of communication with God now complete, while the hymn tune booms forth from the pedals, the rock upon which the church will stand.

Wir glauben all' an einen Gott (We All Believe in One True God): The hymn tune is presented with a childlike simplicity, supported by a four-part accompaniment (including double pedaling throughout) that reflects the underlying complexity of a life of faith. At the conclusion, faith is drawn into an ecstasy that raises the soul to heavenly heights. (This chorale prelude is often said to be “attributed” to Bach, inasmuch as it bears an unmistakable similarity to a setting of the same hymn tune by his student Johann Ludwig Krebs. However, the voicing of the four-part accompaniment, with its elegant use of double pedaling that points backwards to the seventeenth century *Baroque* rather than forward to the eighteenth century *Rococo*, tends to support the argument that it is, at the very least, a JSB “cover” of one of his favorite student’s compositions.)

Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir (Out of the Depths I Cry to You): Contemplation of sinfulness leads to an anguished prayer for forgiveness, the *De Profundis*, its intensity communicated through a six-voice setting with double pedaling throughout, the hymn tune played by the right foot! (Perhaps Bach places the hymn tune in such an interior location – surrounded by a complexity of counterpoint and sound – to reflect the human nature of our prayers; that often, the true prayer of the spirit is almost lost in the chaos of our pride and perceived needs.) The opening phase of this chorale motet is heard on a quiet combination of stops, resulting in a gentleness suggestive of a small child speaking to a parent. This quiet expression of confession gives way to an increasingly intense and insistent registration, as the organ moves from an intermediate plenum reminiscent of that of Bach’s organ heritage (Jan Sweelinck’s early 17th century Dutch tradition, as well as French practice of the late 1600’s) to the Full Organ of Bach’s time.

Alle Menschen müssen sterben (All Men Must Die): The registration of the chorale is cool after the heat of confession, the statement of the hymn tune as simple and straightforward as the message it brings: All Flesh is Grass. Yet, Bach’s organ chorale setting is not grim at all. Instead, it is another lullaby. Death here is not a stark ending of life, but rather a rebirth, the soul rocked gently in the arms of God.

O Lamm Gottes, unschuldig (O Lamb of God): Over three verses, the hymn tune moves from the soprano (God in heaven) to the tenor (God in us) to the pedal (God supporting us and raising us to eternal life). In the third verse, Bach begins a rolling movement in the manual parts, portraying the cycle of life, death, and rebirth. This gives way to a new accompaniment in the style of a horn call, not unlike the post horn call played for departing carriages in Bach’s day (resulting in something of a Baroque *This Train is Bound for Glory, This Train*). The call of the Last Trumpet rises higher and higher as the faithful are lifted towards Heaven. The jubilant, dance-like mood is suddenly shifted, as the believer, from an exalted viewpoint, catches sight of Calvary and the cross of Christ. Now sadness and regret over Jesus’ suffering for our salvation drag the soul back earthward, as Bach employs chromaticism, the “crossing” of the tenor above the alto, and even the *basso ostinato* theme from the *Crucifixus* of the *B Minor Mass* to add emotional weight. But finally, the Holy Spirit and angels, swirling, rising and falling between heaven and earth, raise the soul to the heights of heaven and Life Eternal.

Vor deinen Thron tret' ich (Before Thy Throne I Shall Appear): According to legend, this is the last music composed by Bach, dictated from his deathbed to a student. The hymn tune is more commonly known as *When in the Hour of Utmost Need*, but for this setting Bach took the title from an inner line of the hymn. Bach’s dying conception of appearing before God’s throne is not one of judgment, but one of comfort, the repeated notes of the accompaniment suggesting a gentle hand pat on the soul exhausted from life. *There, there, take your rest, take your rest.*

~ David Buice

Faith Lutheran Church – Organ Specifications

Pipe Organ Foundation Opus 11, 2022

Great (Manual II; pipes in front of sanctuary; 7 ranks, 463 pipes; 21 chimes; 19 tablets)

- 16' Bourdon from Pedal division (notes 1-12) and Gt. 8' Rohrflute (notes 13-61)
- 8' Open diapason (61 pipes)
- 8' Rohrflute (73 pipes)
- 4' Octave (73 pipes)
- 4' Rohrflute from 8' Rohrflute
- 2' Fifteenth from 4' Octave
- Mixture III (183 pipes; 15, 19, 22)
- 8' Trumpet (73 pipes in Swell chamber)
- 4' Clarion from 8' Trumpet
- Chimes (21 chimes in Swell chamber)
- Couplers: Gt to Gt 16', 4', Unison Off; Sw to Gt 16', 8', 4'; Ch to Gt 16', 8', 4'

Swell (Manual III; pipes in chamber behind wall with the cross; 9 ranks, 578 pipes; enclosed with Choir; 18 tablets)

- 16' Gedeckt (73 pipes)
- 8' Gedeckt from 16' Gedeckt
- 8' Salicional (73 pipes)
- 8' Voix Celeste (starts with 8' G; 54 pipes)
- 4' Principal (61 pipes)
- 4' Harmonic Flute (73 pipes)
- 2 2/3' Nasard (61 pipes)
- 2' Harmonic Piccolo from Harmonic Flute
- 1 3/5 Tierce (49 pipes) (top octave doubles back)
- 1 1/3' Quint from Nasard 2 2/3' (top octave doubles back)
- 16' Fagotto (73 pipes)
- 8' Trumpet (part of the Great division but located in the Swell chamber)
- 8' Oboe from Fagotto
- 8' Vox Humana (61 pipes)
- Tremulant
- Couplers: Sw to Sw 16', 4', Unison Off

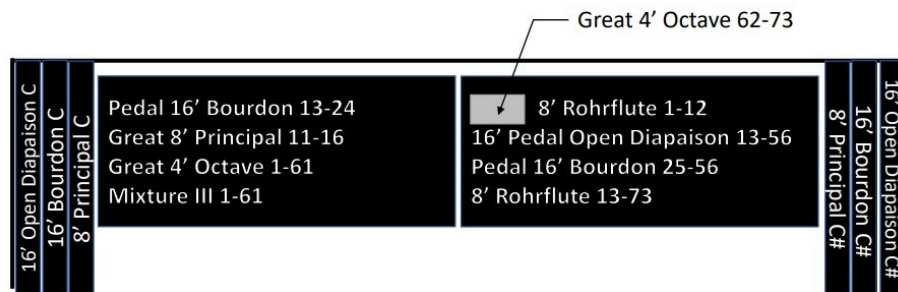
Choir (Manual I; 3 ranks, 176 pipes; enclosed with Swell; 20 tablets)

- 16' Gedeckt Sw
- 8' Principal (bottom octave from 8' Viola Pomposa and 8' Gedeckt combined; remainder from Sw 4' Principal)
- 8' Gedeckt from Gedeckt Sw
- 8' Viola Pomposa (61 pipes)
- 8' Viola Pomposa Celeste (starts with 8' G; 54 pipes)
- 4' Principal Sw
- 4' Salicet from Salicional Sw
- 4' Harmonic Flute Sw
- 2' Harmonic Piccolo from Harmonic Flute Sw
- 16' Trumpet (bottom octave is from Fagotto)
- 8' Clarinet (61 pipes)
- 8' Trumpet Gt
- 4' Clarion from Gt Trumpet
- Couplers: Ch to Ch 16', 4', Unison off; Sw to Ch 16', 8', 4'; Gt to Ch 8'

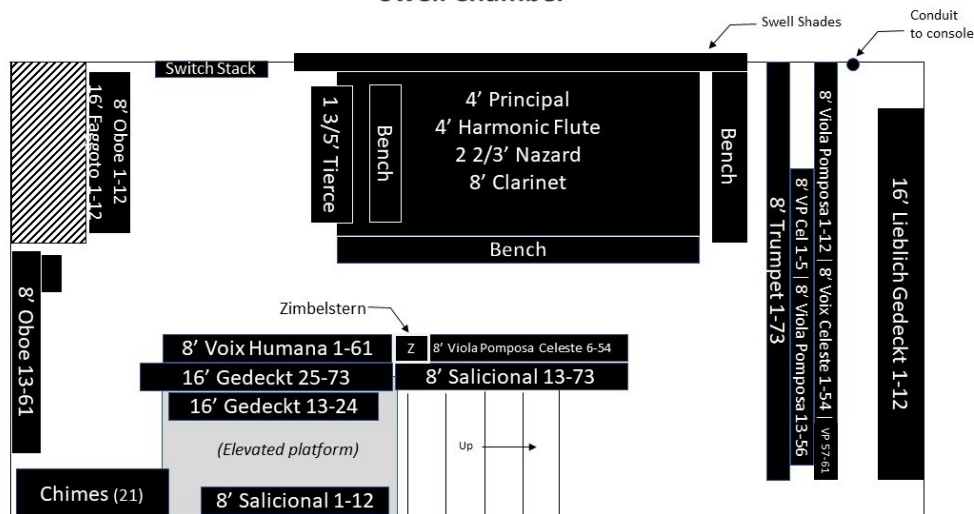
- Pedal (Pipes in front of sanctuary with Great; 2 ranks, 112 pipes; 24 tablets)
- 32' Resultant (1-12 is 16' Bourdon plus 16' Gedeckt on the 5th; 13-32 is 16' Bourdon)
 - 16' Open Diapason (56 pipes)
 - 16' Bourdon (56 pipes)
 - 16' Gedeckt Sw
 - 8' Octave from 16' Open Diapason
 - 8' Major Flute from 16' Bourdon
 - 8' Viola Pomposa Ch
 - 4' Super Octave from 16' Open Diapason
 - 4' Flute from 16' Bourdon
 - Mixture III Gt
 - 2' Principal Gt
 - 16' Fagotto Sw
 - 8' Trumpet Gt
 - 8' Oboe Sw
 - 4' Clarion from 8' Trumpet Sw
 - Zimbelstern—8 bells operated by reversible toe stud
 - Chimes
 - Couplers: Gt to Ped 8, 4; Sw to Ped 8, 4; Ch to Ped 8, 4

SUMMARY: 21 ranks, 1,329 pipes, 21 chimes, 8 bells; 502 pipes in sanctuary, 827 pipes in chamber.

Faith Lutheran Church Great and Pedal



Swell Chamber





Faith Lutheran Church
8208 18th Ave NE; Seattle, WA 98115
www.faithseattle.org