

2 CDs

audite

a kind of
Organ-School
Bach | Mendelssohn
THE ORGAN SONATAS

Hans-Eberhard Roß

Goll Organ of St. Martin, Memmingen

THE ORGAN SONATAS

Johann Sebastian Bach**Organ Sonata No. 1 in E-flat major, BWV 525**

- I. Allegro moderato 2:44
- II. Adagio 5:25
- III. Allegro 2:57

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy**Organ Sonata No. 1 in F minor, Op. 65/1**

- I. Allegro moderato e serioso 4:45
- II. Adagio 2:53
- III. Andante recitativo 2:48
- IV. Allegro assai vivace 3:35

Johann Sebastian Bach**Organ Sonata No. 2 in C minor, BWV 526**

- I. Vivace 3:41
- II. Largo 3:56
- III. Allegro 4:19

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy**Organ Sonata No. 2 in C minor, Op. 65/2**

- I. Grave – Adagio 4:05
- II. Allegro maestoso e vivace 2:00
- III. Fuga. Allegro moderato 3:10

Johann Sebastian Bach**Organ Sonata No. 3 in D minor, BWV 527**

- I. Andante 5:29
- II. Adagio e dolce 3:32
- III. Vivace 3:52

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy**Organ Sonata No. 3 in A major, Op. 65/3**

- I. Con moto maestoso 6:51
- II. Andante tranquillo 2:31

Johann Sebastian Bach**Organ Sonata No. 4 in E minor, BWV 528**

- I. Adagio – Vivace 2:34
- II. Andante 5:45
- III. Un poco allegro 2:31

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy**Organ Sonata No. 4 in B-flat major, Op. 65/4**

- I. Allegro con brio 3:40
- II. Andante religioso 2:18
- III. Allegretto 3:55
- IV. Allegro maestoso e vivace 3:42

Johann Sebastian Bach**Organ Sonata No. 5 in C major, BWV 529**

- I. Allegro 5:04
- II. Largo 5:01
- III. Allegro 4:00

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy**Organ Sonata No. 5 in D major, Op. 65/5**

- I. Andante 1:00
- II. Andante con moto 2:22
- III. Allegro maestoso 4:01

Johann Sebastian Bach**Organ Sonata No. 6 in G major, BWV 530**

- I. Vivace 4:04
- II. Lento 5:36
- III. Allegro 3:44

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy**Organ Sonata No. 6 in D minor, Op. 65/6**

- I. Choral 0:55
- II. Andante sostenuto 7:17
- III. Fuga. Sostenuto e legato 2:07
- IV. Finale. Andante 2:21

“a kind of organ school”

“However, a new view [...] will not emerge from sources and literature alone, as abundant as these are. For that, new questions are needed.”¹

It seems that “new questions” might also be helpful when looking at well-known masterpieces in music, including works such as Johann Sebastian Bach’s and Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy’s six respective organ sonatas. Thanks to the research of Andreas Arand², we know about the connection that Mendelssohn wanted to forge between his and Bach’s sonatas, written a good hundred years previously. What is the nature of this joint volume? It is the idea of a tutor, an “organ school”, demanding challenging techniques on the highest musical level.

We know from Bach’s first biographer, Johann Nikolaus Forkel, that Bach composed these sonatas “for his eldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann, who had to use them to grow into the great organist he later became.”³ Consequently, the first publications of the Trio Sonatas also emphasise their “study character”. Thus in 1809, Samuel Wesley adapted the sonatas “for three hands upon the Piano Forte” for their earliest edition, published in London. This arrangement for two players refers to private use for study purposes. Concert performances were clearly not intended here.

In 1827, Hans Georg Nägeli issued a “Practische Orgelschule” in Zurich: Mendelssohn was in contact with these Bach scholars, as well as with Friedrich Konrad Griepenkerl, who edited the first German edition for Peters in 1844. In the same year, Mendelssohn began composing his six sonatas.

Mendelssohn was not only familiar with Bach’s six Trio Sonatas, he was also aware of their pedagogical purpose. When asked by a music publisher to write organ works for the British market during one of his numerous tours to Britain – where he often gave organ recitals, demonstrating his art upon the instrument – Mendelssohn spontaneously agreed. Originally requested to write “several voluntaries”, Mendelssohn gradually developed the plan to compose six sonatas – equal in number to Bach’s sonatas and also in their intention to represent “a kind of organ school”. These were Mendelssohn’s own words in a letter of 1 May 1845 to the English music publishing firm Coventry & Hollier. What, then, makes Bach’s and Mendelssohn’s sonatas an “organ school”?

Despite being limited to three parts, played on two manuals and pedals, Bach’s six Trio Sonatas, written between 1727 and 1732, remain a touchstone for every organist. The independence between the two hands and the pedals throughout, the constantly crossing parts between the two hands (often taking the left hand into high registers, above the right hand), the virtuoso, continuous pedal lines and finally the absolute audibility of the musical structure represent enormous challenges even for today’s players. Or, as Marie-Claire Alain put it: “But who amongst us will dare claim that he plays them without any anxious feeling?”

During his eight tours to Britain, Mendelssohn gave many organ recitals, often featuring works by Johann Sebastian Bach. As in Germany, his pedal technique caused a sensation. This was hard-earned, as Mendelssohn himself explained following his benefit concert for the Bach memorial in Leipzig: “But I also practised so much for eight days beforehand that I could hardly stand up straight on my feet, and walked nothing but organ passages in the street.”

And indeed, it is the independent pedal use in the Mendelssohn sonatas which immediately stands out. Every sonata, almost every movement, has its own pedal solo! The very first sonata boasts pedal entries featuring the theme of the fugue which, after further development, culminate in a great solo, above which the chorale theme is heard in long note values. In the final movement, two substantial cadenza-like pedal solos over sustained chords create a powerful final effect (from bar 108 track 7, 2’26 – 2’34, and from bar 134 track 7, 3’06 – 3’12).

¹ From the preface of the Bismarck biography by Christoph Nonn: Bismarck. Ein Preuße und sein Jahrhundert. Munich, 2015.

² Andreas Arand: Mendelssohns Sonaten op. 65 und Bachs Orgeltriosonaten, in: Ars Organi, vol. 61, book 3 (September 2013), pp. 170.

³ Johann Nikolaus Forkel: Ueber Johann Sebastian Bachs Leben, Kunst und Kunstwerke. Leipzig, 1802, p. 60.

Similar passages can also be heard in all the other sonatas:

Sonata No. 2

2nd movement, from bar 21 (track 12, 0'36 – 0'44)

3rd movement, from bar 77 (track 13, 2'04 – 2'16)

and from bar 92 (track 13, 2'30 – 2'37)

Sonata No. 3

1st movement, from bar 99 (track 17, 4'54 – 5'34)

Sonata No. 4

1st movement, from bar 42 (track 22, 1'42 – 1'57)

4th movement, from bar 71 (track 25, 2'39 – 2'51)

Sonata No. 5

2nd movement (track 30)

3rd movement, from bar 21 (track 31, 0'31 – 0'40)

Sonata No. 6

2st movement, from bar 55 (track 36, 1'58 – 2'55)

This is all the more striking because the English organs of Mendelssohn's time had shortened pedalboards: his sonatas therefore also represented a form of futuristic music, at once a mission for, and a legacy to, organ builders.

Furthermore, Mendelssohn frequently requires playing on different manuals. As early as in the first movement of the first sonata, the transitions between manuals from the fugue section to the chorale sections and back (bars 40, 44, 46, 49, 51, 60) require considerable skill on the part of the performer, as do the changes between the recitative sections and the fortissimo chords in the third movement of this sonata. Obbligato playing to emphasise a solo part (Sonata No. 1, second movement; Sonata No. 2, first movement; Sonata No. 6, second movement) is demanded by Mendelssohn as a matter of course. In the first movement of the Second Sonata, he comes very close to Bach by having a solo part accompanied by two parts on another manual, making extensive use of part crossings. Here, even three staves do not suffice.

On interpretation

Going with the idea of an "organ school", Mendelssohn's Sonatas can, by way of delicately extending the registrations, making use of pistons, distributing the manuals and through playing technique, be transferred into our time. Here are some examples from my interpretation:

Sonata No. 1

In the third movement, the recitative sections from bar 6 onwards can be played wonderfully on two different manuals. This can be maintained by a change of register from bar 26, if the registration of the left hand is coupled to the pedals.

In the fourth movement, the fanfare-like major-keyed theme can be emphasised to great effect on a separate manual with stronger registration (from bar 68, track 7, 1'30), even when it appears in the tenor (bar 76 / 1'41) or in the bass lines (bar 81 / 1'47). Similarly in the passages from bar 96 (2'11) and from bar 130 (3'00) and onwards with additional strengthening of the registration.

Sonata No. 3

The fugal theme in the first movement from bar 24 (track 17, 1'13) as well as the counterpoint in semiquavers from bar 58 (2'50) gain dramatic power if they are consistently articulated instead of being played in an exhausting continuous legato.

The characteristic quaver motif at the beginning of the second movement can easily be emphasised on a separate manual in the coda from bar 34 (track 18, 1'55).

Sonata No. 4

In the second movement, the melody of the main theme can be lightly emphasised by being played entirely on its own on a separate manual.

In the third movement, the solo soprano part (from bar 3 track 24, 0'08) and the solo tenor part (from bar 24 / 1'13) should be played on separate manuals, the accompanying semiquavers on a third. Yet the reprise of the soprano theme from bar 48 (2'27) onwards is never heard soloistically. If, however, the player manages simultaneously to play two manuals using just one hand (!), the right hand can play the theme on its own on a higher manual, whilst, usually with the thumb, helping out the left hand on the lower accompanying manual.

The question of the “correct” instrument

Another album of Bach's Trio Sonatas and Mendelssohn's Organ Sonatas, when the CD market already offers so many, and very good, recordings of these works?

The Goll organ of St. Martin in Memmingen is a modern instrument, built in the late twentieth century. Its core sound is designed to represent nineteenth century French symphonic repertoire. The instrument's most significant characteristic trait, however, is its exemplary integration of baroque and early romantic timbres. As a result, it is capable of reproducing different epochs of organ music history in its own voice, always true to the relevant style.

It therefore seemed especially appealing to use this particular voice to bring to life the very different works of Bach and Mendelssohn: it felt as if, over the centuries, the sound of one instrument had given shape to the technical playing requirements of Bach and Mendelssohn.

Structuring the pieces

If Bach's and Mendelssohn's sonatas are to be considered from a certain point of view, the question arises as to how to structure and present them on this album. Even though Mendelssohn refrained from placing his sonatas into an inner context with those of Bach – be it through the choice of keys, by echoing or quoting themes or through formal analogies – we would nonetheless like to build a bridge by pairing each Bach sonata with a Mendelssohn sonata. Not only will this make the listening experience more exciting, but it will also help to sensitise the ear once again to the beauty of the music in its different styles – irrespective of the technical challenges for the performer.

HANS-EBERHARD ROß



Hans-Eberhard Roß studied Protestant church music at the Hochschule für Musik Würzburg. He graduated in 1986 and completed a masterclass diploma under Prof. Günther Kaunzinger in 1990. He took part in various international organ competitions, winning first prize in 1985 at the competition of the Musikalische Akademie Würzburg.

From 1987 until 1990 Hans-Eberhard Roß was choirmaster and organist in Meerbusch. Since 1991, he has been choirmaster of the deanery of St. Martin in Memmingen; in 2002, he was awarded the title of “church music director”. In 2012, he received the “Kulturpreis” of the city of Memmingen. In recognition of his services to the Goll organ of St. Martin, the Goll organ building company honoured him with the “Goll Medal” in 2018.

In addition to his musical responsibilities at church, Hans-Eberhard Roß regularly appears as organ recitalist. He has performed solo recitals as well as duo programmes with trumpet, percussion, alphorn and recitation. His varied activities are also documented on several CDs, including the world's first complete edition of the organ and harmonium works by César Franck and the complete organ symphonies by Louis Vierne (audite). In spring 2021, he released the 2CD set *a kind of organ school*, presenting the six trio sonatas by J.S. Bach and the six organ sonatas by Mendelssohn.

ORGAN DISPOSITION

The Goll organ of St. Martin, Memmingen

Hauptwerk**Manual I C - c''''**

Prästant	16'
Prinzipal	8'
Gedeckt	8'
Doppelflöte	8'
Gambe	8'
Oktave	4'
Flöte	4'
Quinte	$2\frac{2}{3}$ '
Oktave	2'
Mixtur 4f.	$1\frac{1}{3}$ '
Cymbel 4f.	1'
Cornett 5f.	8' ab f°
Fagott	16'
Trompete	8'
Klarine	4'
Tremulant	

Solo**Manual IV C - c''''**

Tuba magna	16'
Tuba mirabilis	8'
Clairon	4'

Pedal**Positif****Manual II C - c''''**

Montre	8'
Flûte à fuseau	8'
Salicional	8'
Prestant	4'
Flûte à cheminée	4'
Nasard	$2\frac{2}{3}$ '
Flageolet	2'
Tièrce	$1\frac{3}{5}$ '
Larigot	$1\frac{1}{3}$ '
Fourniture 4f.	$1\frac{1}{3}$ '
Ranquette	16'
Trompette	8'
Cromorne	8'
Tremblant	

C - g'

Grand Bourdon	32'
Contrebasse	16'
Soubasse	16'
Basse	8'
Flûte	8'
Violoncelle	8'
Octave	4'
Fourniture 4f.	$2\frac{2}{3}$ '
Contrebombarde	32'
Bombarde	16'
Posaune	16'
Trompette	8'
Clairon	4'

Récit**Manual III C - c''''**

Bourdon	16'
Diapason	8'
Cor de nuit	8'
Flûte harmonique	8'
Gambe	8'
Voix céleste	8'
Viole	4'
Flûte octaviante	4'
Nasard harmonique	$2\frac{2}{3}$ '
Octavin	2'
Tièrce harmonique	$1\frac{3}{5}$ '
Piccolo	1'
Plein jeu harmonique 2-5f.	2'
Bombarde	16'
Trompette harmonique	8'
Hautbois	8'
Voix humaine	8'
Clairon harmonique	4'
Tremblant	

Erbaut 1998

62 Register

4 Manuale C - c''''

Pedal C - g'

Spieltraktur, Koppeln,

Registertraktur rein

mechanisch,

computergesteuerte

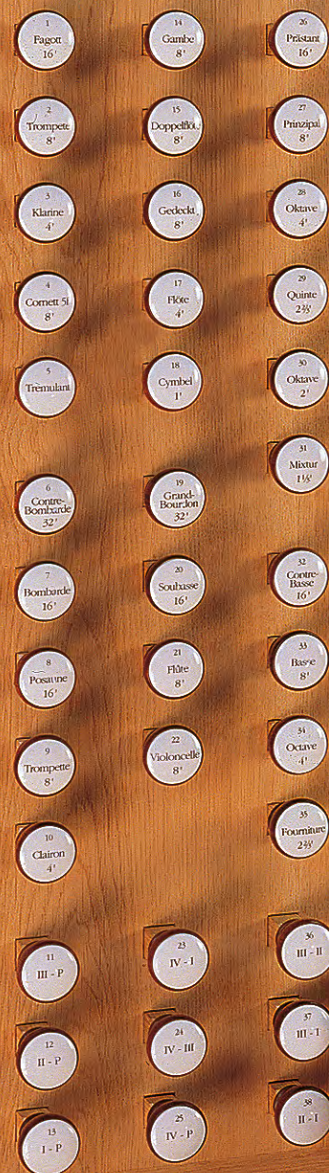
Setzeranlage und

Diskettenlaufwerk



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