

The background is an abstract painting featuring bold, black outlines and a variety of colors including teal, orange, pink, yellow, and grey. The composition is dense with geometric and organic shapes, creating a complex, layered visual effect. The overall style is reminiscent of mid-century modern or abstract expressionist art.

audite

BATOCCHIASI

THE
BATOCCHIASI

Jonathan Ferrucci

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Tocatta in C Minor, BWV 911

Moderato 3:41

Allegro 8:13

Tocatta in G Minor, BWV 915

Adagio 1:48

Allegro 3:36

Fuga 4:10

Tocatta in D Minor, BWV 913

– 3:04

Thema 3:14

Adagio 2:39

Allegro 4:04

Tocatta in G Major, BWV 916

Presto 2:06

Adagio 2:41

Allegro e presto 2:53

Tocatta in E Minor, BWV 914

– 5:01

Fuga. Allegro 2:43

Tocatta in F-Sharp Minor, BWV 910

– 3:47

Presto e staccato 7:14

Tocatta in D Major, BWV 912

Presto 3:02

Adagio 8:11



“I feel as though I were composing with Bach”**Jonathan Ferrucci plays the keyboard toccatas by Johann Sebastian Bach**

Good instrumental teachers know that sometimes they have to shock their students in order to spell out what they are letting themselves in for. Jonathan Ferrucci experienced such a shock one day in Giovanni Carmassi's piano class at the Florence conservatoire. “Don't become a musician!”, the young pianist was told. But he knew what Carmassi meant: don't become a musician if you are not fully committed. “The point of the exercise was”, his pupil recalls today, “to gauge whether I really felt the need to become a musician – and whether I wanted to commit to the profession with all its consequences.”

The psychological test worked – there was no turning back for Jonathan Ferrucci, who is grateful to his Italian teacher and has dedicated this CD to Giovanni Carmassi. After studying in Florence, he moved to Britain to study with the New Zealand pianist Joan Havill at London's Guildhall School, where he completed his master's degree and concert diploma. Working with Angela Hewitt as well as masterclasses with piano greats such as Aldo Ciccolini, Murray Perahia and Richard Goode gave him the confidence he needed to take the leap into concert life. One of the great and demanding piano cycles served as a door opener: Bach's *Goldberg Variations*.

Of course, Jonathan Ferrucci masters a broad repertoire from the baroque to the twentieth century – otherwise he would not be able to hold his own in the face of the flood of excellent young pianists. Nevertheless, Johann Sebastian Bach has played a special role for him since his childhood. Born in Florence to an Italian father and an Australian mother, he absorbed the overwhelming presence of art and history in Italy and the vastness of the landscape and nature in Australia as an inspiring contrast between two ways of life. In this experiential world, the young Jonathan may have perceived Bach's music as a form of sublimation: of compositional rigour and musical freedom, of tradition and future vision, musical discipline and imagination.

Spontaneity and the joy of invention

Ferrucci found the essence of this harmony of opposites in Bach in the seven surviving harpsichord toccatas. Their heritage is complicated; no manuscript by Bach himself exists for any of the pieces. Nevertheless, researchers assume that the works (as well as the toccatas for organ) were composed during Bach's youth – some call it his “Sturm und Drang” period. In Lüneburg, where he completed his schooling, Bach possibly had lessons with the organist Georg Böhm, but also travelled to Hamburg several times to hear the magnificent organs of the Hanseatic city and musical giants such as Johann Adam Reincken. The famous Organ Toccata in D minor (if it was written by Bach at all) demonstrates his youthful approach: the wildness of the opening, which breaks out like a defiant improvisation, the fantastically effervescent figures, the bold harmonies, but also the rather simple fugue, which is flooded once again by a toccata at the end – all of this bears similarities to the North German organ school, which Bach admired. These brilliantly developed basic elements of a high baroque toccata can also be found a little later in Bach's harpsichord toccatas.

After a brief intermezzo as a court musician in Weimar, Bach took up his first major post as organist of the Neue Kirche in Arnstadt in Thuringia in 1703. In 1985, a bronze statue by the sculptor Bernd Göbel was erected near the church, depicting the young Bach as a rebel without a doublet or wig, his legs casually stretched out. This contradicted the official image of Bach in the GDR at the time, but captures some of the youthful exuberance of the man and his music. On top of that, there were his curiosity and drive for perfection: in 1705, he travelled from Arnstadt to Lübeck on foot – a distance of over 250 miles – in order to hear the then already legendary organist and composer Dieterich Buxtehude, and also possibly to offer his services as an assistant and music scribe. Buxtehude's work added the finishing touches to Bach's early compositions, from which his harpsichord toccatas also benefited – although the majority were probably composed during his time as court organist in Weimar (from 1708).

“In my opinion the toccatas represent the polar opposite to the *Goldberg Variations*,” says Jonathan Ferrucci. “There, Bach appears as a master of extremely structured music, with perfectly balanced proportions in harmony and rhythm, with a lot of numeric symbolism. The toccatas are completely different and seem more like a large playground to me. He is bubbling over with ideas and always creates abrupt contrasts when you least expect them. There is this wild, youthful energy with which he explores all the affects and formal possibilities of the music of the time. And when I play it, I feel as though I were composing the music together with Bach in that moment – that's what creates this incredible sense of spontaneity and his delight in invention.”

Unlike the fugue, concerto or sonata, the toccata is not a textbook musical genre. “Toccare”, the Italian word for “to touch” or “to strike”, does not refer to a form, but to an instrumentation: the toccata is an instrumental piece in which the keys of a keyboard instrument – mostly the organ or harpsichord – were “struck” since the seventeenth century; early examples include several volumes of toccatas by the Roman keyboard virtuoso Girolamo Frescobaldi. Bach's second eldest son, Carl Philipp Emanuel, confirmed that his father not only “loved and studied” the German organ school, but also the works of Frescobaldi. In them, one finds improvisatory, virtuoso sections alongside fugues and other contrapuntal structures, but also arrangements of contemporary vocal music, which Frescobaldi provided with his own ornamentation.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Bach reinterpreted the freedom and variety of forms of his role models Frescobaldi, Johann Jakob Froberger and Buxtehude. The framework usually consists of a recitative-like opening, in which Bach explores the tonal range and showcases the player's dexterity, and a final fugue, which can be dance-like, chromatic or can feature a grand dramatic arc. The centre usually comprises an adagio section in the form of an (ornamented) aria or a notated improvisation on several central motifs. In between these essential toccata “building blocks”, Bach adds further fugues or slow sections, expanding his toccatas into veritable suites.

It also becomes clear, however, that from these colourfully diverse elements he gradually develops formal models which were to become central in his later work: for example, the combination of prelude and fugue, which he later exploits systematically in the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, or the three-movement Italian concerto by Vivaldi, which is quoted in what is probably the latest **Toccatina in G major, BWV 916**. Here, the first section clearly reveals the form of a concerto movement featuring ritornellos and interludes, followed by an expressive adagio and a final fugue.

Bach and yoga

“For Bach, the toccatas were an inexhaustible field of experimentation and a musical laboratory for finding his style,” summarises Jonathan Ferrucci. No easy task for the interpreter: Ferrucci had to work out the proportions, tempo relationships and ornamentation technique in preparation for his recording for audite, as well as how to transfer the pieces intended for the harpsichord to the sound spectrum of a modern Yamaha grand piano. Ferrucci seeks to maximise the transparency of the part writing in the fugues and makes intelligent use of the middle pedal, the so-called “sostenuto pedal”, with which a note can be sustained without compromising the clarity of the following passages. “The fugues must of course retain the rigour of a fugue, otherwise you lose the intensity and pulse of the music. Because this music draws its very vitality from the alternation of exceptionally free passages and particularly strict fugues. The balance between the two allows the music to breathe.”

In these “free passages” – the adagios and transitions – Ferrucci treats the tempo flexibly. And of course he makes use of the ornamentation technique typical of the period, which is only scantily noted in the score: “If we want to be authentic in the free sections in the sense of the playing technique of the time, it would be sacrilegious *not* to improvise or embellish – the music practically invites us to add things. With some passages, it would be almost ridiculous to play them exactly as they are written. There are recordings where this was done – even Glenn Gould, whom I greatly admire, was very conservative in his use of ornamentation.”

For Jonathan Ferrucci, exploring the opposition of rigour and freedom is by no means limited to music. He has been practising Ashtanga yoga every day for many years. And like the violinist Yehudi Menuhin, who overcame an artistic crisis through yoga, Ferrucci recognises parallels between music and a balanced body. “The essence of yoga is that you practise for a lifetime: I practise music and I practise yoga for a lifetime. For me, Ashtanga and music represent different languages to find out what it means to be human.”

Michael Struck-Schloen

Translation: Viola Scheffel

Jonathan Ferrucci

Italian-Australian pianist Jonathan Ferrucci was born in Florence and studied at the Conservatorio di Musica Luigi Cherubini, where he completed his Bachelor degree with honours, then at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, where he continued his studies with a Masters, followed by Artist Diploma and a one year Artist Fellowship. Along the way, his studies have been supported through scholarships and grants by the Leverhulme Trust, Jessie Wakefield Award, Guildhall School Trust, Tait Memorial Trust and Kirckman Society.

In addition to his training with Giovanni Carmassi in Florence and Joan Havill at the Guildhall School in London, his artistic sensitivity has been profoundly influenced by Angela Hewitt, with whom he has worked since 2014, and by his studies with Robert Levin, Aldo Ciccolini and Zhu Xiao-Mei. His journey has been inspired along the way by masterclasses with Murray Perahia, Richard Goode, Christian Zacharias, Dmitri Bashkirov and Peter Frankl.

Ferrucci has given concerts as a soloist and chamber musician across Europe, Australia and the United States. Among other venues, he has performed in Wigmore Hall, Barbican Centre, Milton Court Concert Hall, Carnegie Weill Hall and the Fazioli Concert Hall. His Wigmore debut in 2017 was recorded live and released as a CD.

Ferrucci is a prize winner of numerous competitions, such as the International Bach Competition in Leipzig, the Royal Over-Seas League and the Jaques Samuel Intercollegiate Piano Competition. A Kirckman Society Artist for 2022/23 and Keyboard Trust Artist since 2019, Ferrucci's recent activity includes a United States tour and, in addition to several recitals (including at the Trasimeno Music Festival and Brighton Festival), concerts in Italy with the Orchestra da Camera di Perugia, playing as a soloist and together with his mentor Angela Hewitt.

His repertoire ranges from baroque music to contemporary composers with main focus on J.S. Bach: in 2020 he began his study of the *Goldberg Variations*, and has since performed them in Italy, the US, and most recently at Kings Place, London, in March 2024. He continued exploring Bach's music with the keyboard Toccatas, which he performed in their entirety in Florence and Città della Pieve.

Parallel to his time spent at the piano, Ferrucci is a dedicated Ash-tanga Yoga practitioner. He considers Yoga integral to his work as a musician and essential in life.



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Dipl.-Tonmeister Ludger Böckenhoff

recording engineer:

Dipl.-Tonmeister Piotr Furmanczyk

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Yamaha CFX

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Paul Klee (1879 - 1940):

Park bei Lu., 1938, 129

Öl- und Kleisterfarbe auf Papier auf Jute;

originale Rahmenleisten 100 x 70 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Bildarchiv

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