



Dear friends,

Please enjoy the following video link: <https://vimeo.com/424425294>

This video is the final installment in the J.S. Bach *German Organ Mass*. First, we have four duets composed for manuals alone. The duets could ostensibly be performed on any keyboard instrument. The texture is two-voice counterpoint, like the more rudimentary *Two-Part Inventions*, but the duets show a level of mastery well beyond anything found in the *Inventions*. There are no sacred texts associated with the duets or with the final *Fuga a5*. Technically, these are secular rather than sacred works. However, it is not at all clear that Bach would have given much importance to this distinction. Instead, it is more likely that would have considered all of his artistic work to be divinely inspired. Whether the modern listener considers that divine spark to be external, like the Rationalist Christianity of the time, or internal, like the humanists, is not particularly important. Bach was known to inscribe the end of his scores, both sacred and secular, with the motto *Soli Deo Gloria* (“Glory to God alone”). I suspect he meant it.

The *Fuga a5* is the companion work to the *Praeludium* from the beginning of the *German Organ Mass*. Like the *Praeludium*, there is an abundance of the number “three” present in the musical texture, which scholars believe to be representative of the Trinity. The *Fuga a 5* is written in three large sections, each with a distinctive fugue subject. Additionally, the first subject is incorporated into the second section, and the first and second subjects are incorporated into the third section. In English speaking countries, this work has become known colloquially as the “St. Anne Fugue” because the first fugue subject bears a superficial resemblance to the hymn tune St. Anne, which we know as “O God, our help in ages past.” However, scholars tend to agree that it is highly unlikely that Bach would have known the tune “St. Anne,” so the similarity is probably just a coincidence.

Thank you for listening to the *German Organ Mass*. If you enjoyed these videos, please share them.

Peace,
Richard Townley