

Bach – Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue in D minor BWV 903 with sheet music

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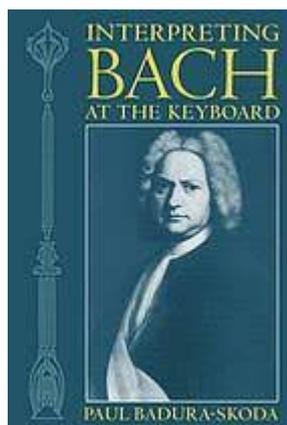
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The Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue in D minor, BWV 903, is a work for harpsichord by Johann Sebastian Bach. Bach probably composed it during his stay in Köthen from 1717 to 1723.

The piece was already considered a unique masterpiece during his lifetime. Nowadays it is often played on the piano.

An autograph of this work is not known. The musicologist Walther Siegmund-Schultze points out that the piece belongs to the 'Köthen works' due to its improvisatory and expressive character, which uses all the keys.

At least 16 different manuscript copies of the score survive, including five from Bach's life. The oldest copy is just a shorter two-bar early variant of the fantasy. It was written by Bach's student Johann Tobias Krebs and was created after 1717, around the time of its origin.

Two other copies emerged around 1730 that include the fugue; they were possibly written by Gottfried Grunewald or Christoph Graupner.

A copy of the double work comes from Johann Friedrich Agricola and was written between 1738 and 1740. A manuscript from 1750 survives,[citation needed] and a complete copy by Johann Nikolaus Forkel (1800).

From these two manuscripts come the first printed editions of the work of Franz Anton Hoffmeister (1802) and Friedrich Konrad Griepenkerl (1819). Due to significant differences in detail, which cannot be traced back to a common basic form, it is assumed that Bach himself composed the various versions of the work that are in circulation.

Structure

Chromatic fantasy begins as a toccata with rapid rises and falls in thirty-second notes (sixteenth notes) and broken chords in sixteenth-note triplets (16th notes), which are often diminished seventh chords aligned in semitones.

The second part is a series of very clear and remotely modulating soft opening chords that are written in the

earliest copies as 'Arpeggio', i.e. they require an extended chord.

The third part is entitled Recitativo and includes a variety of ornate, rich and highly expressive melodies. This part contains several enharmonic equivalents. The recitative ends with passages sinking chromatically into diminished seventh chords above the D pedal point.

The fugue theme consists of an ascending semitone line from A to C, here from the third to fifth of D minor to the relative major key of F major.