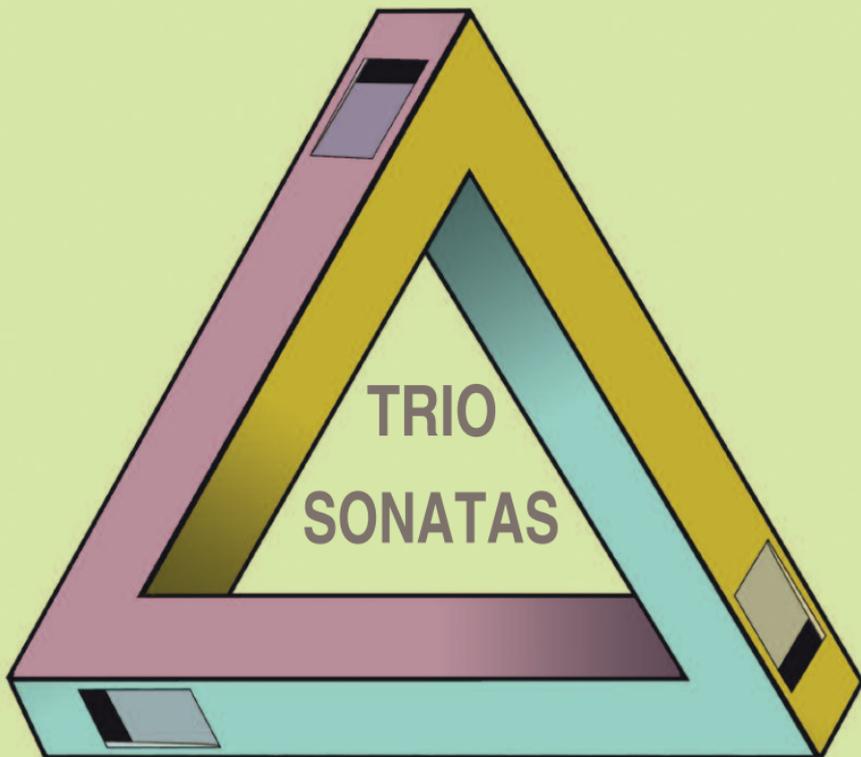


JS BACH



ROBERT COSTIN

ORGAN



JS BACH

TRIO SONATAS

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Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

SONATA NO.5 IN C MAJOR BWV 529

1	i Allegro	5'08
2	ii Largo	5'46
3	iii Allegro	3'56

SONATA NO.3 IN D MINOR BWV 527

4	i Andante	5'42
5	ii Adagio e dolce	4'39
6	iii Vivace	3'49

SONATA NO.6 IN G MAJOR BWV 530

7	i Vivace	3'54
8	ii Lento	5'41
9	iii Allegro	3'44

SONATA NO.4 IN E MINOR BWV 528

10	i Adagio	2'50
11	ii Andante	5'18
12	iii Un poco allegro	2'41

SONATA NO.1 IN E FLAT MAJOR BWV 525

13	i First movement	3'05
14	ii Adagio	6'02
15	iii Allegro	3'47

SONATA NO.2 IN C MINOR BWV 526

16	i Vivace	3'37
17	ii Largo	3'39
18	iii Allegro	4'17

77'34

ROBERT COSTIN

The Organ of Pembroke College, Cambridge



TRIO SONATAS BWV 525-530

Various trios for the organ have become known, particularly six for two manuals and pedal which are written in such gallant style that they still sound very good and never grow old, but on the contrary will outlive all revolutions and fashions in music.

Anonymous author, most likely Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1788)

According to his first biographer Johann Nikolaus Forkel (1802), Bach compiled his six sonatas for two claviers and pedals for his beloved first son Wilhelm Friedemann (b.1710) to instruct him in organ playing and composition. Even when measured against his own exalted standards they are works of a unique quality and variety, ranging from movements of joyous high spirits to ones of rare intimacy and introspection. Over and above their many interpretative challenges, they remain the ultimate technical testing-ground for organists, demanding complete equality and independence of hands and feet if their musical riches are to be fully realised.

A key trait of Bach's compositional style is the transference and assimilation of styles and idioms from one instrument or ensemble to another. The melodic fluidity and drama of contemporary Italian music greatly appealed to him, and were reflected in his transcriptions of concertos for organ and harpsichord from his Weimar years and his later keyboard concertos and sonatas with keyboard obbligato. In the six organ sonatas Bach used the familiar baroque trio-sonata texture, setting them apart from the normal idioms for the instrument. However, his adoption of the Italian chamber style is selective and not total, for example in the characteristic rigour of the part writing and the use of a three-movement plan, owing more to the concerto than to the sonata.

Bach's manuscript seems to have been compiled during the late 1720s, and the idea that this was for the education of Wilhelm Friedemann is given weight by the existence of a further copy made jointly by Friedemann and his stepmother Anna Magdalena. This must have been before he gained his prestigious first post as organist of the Dresden Sophienkirch in 1733. There were many copies of the sonatas in circulation by the middle

of the 18th century, indicating a wide appreciation among Bach's circle. Although his music was little known outside northern Germany at the end of the 18th century, Mozart knew the organ sonatas: in 1782 he produced *Six preludes and fugues for string trio K404a*, which included the second and third movements of *Sonata no.2*. The six sonatas appeared in print for the first time in 1827.

Given their provenance, it is perhaps no surprise that the sonatas contain arrangements from earlier instrumental works, including the opening movement of *Sonata no.4*, which began life as the Sinfonia to the second part of Bach's *Cantata no.76* (scored for oboe d'amore, viola da gamba, and continuo), one of his first Leipzig compositions. Bach's manuscript also shows that he rewrote several of the movements as he made the compilation. Since the sequence of keys in which the sonatas appear follows no logical pattern, it seems reasonable to assume that they were compiled at different times, possibly, as Peter Williams has suggested, 'over the period in which [Wilhelm Friedemann] was learning the organ'. Only the *Sonata no.6* is agreed to have been written specifically for the organ.

The *Allegro* of the **Sonata no.5 in C major** is a ritornello movement that owes a clear debt to the concertos of Vivaldi. The expressive *Largo* contains some wonderfully ornate interludes between statements of the theme; it also originally appeared as the middle movement of an earlier prelude and fugue, the *Prelude, trio and fugue in B flat BWV 545b*. The spirited fugal finale is essentially a fugue for two violins and bass.

The plangent opening *Andante* of the **Sonata no.3 in D minor** has the feel of a lost chamber work; indeed the graceful and sweet second movement was later taken into the *Triple concerto BWV 1044*. The final *Vivace* soon dispels any notions that this is the 'easy' sonata, with the triplet textures presenting a touch of the new gallant style.

The bold opening movement of the **Sonata no.6 in G major** betrays its Italian heritage more than any other one in the set, with both upper voices starting together in concerto style. The plaintive *Lento* is strikingly reminiscent in motive and gesture of certain arias from Bach's Passions, specifically *Erbarme dich* from the *St Matthew Passion* of 1727. The final *Allegro* is a complex fugal movement, containing many challenges for the unwary performer.

The brief and solemn introduction of the **Sonata no.4 in E minor** slides seamlessly into the flowing *Vivace*. The elaborate and touching *Andante*, with its short-breathed motivic style, may well date back to Bach's earliest years as an organ composer, but the intricate and graceful final movement is in a more mature style.

The first movement of the **Sonata no.1 in E flat major** begins with a rising triadic figure, which permeates the whole work in one form or another. Bach provided no tempo marking but I find an *allegro moderato* pace lends buoyancy and momentum to the melodic lines. The middle movement is in the form of a gently swaying *siciliano*, with some beautiful sequences shared between the hands, and the bubbling final *Allegro* creates some deliciously witty dialogues in the part-writing.

The **Sonata no.2 in C minor** opens with a dramatic and purposeful *Vivace* in *ritornello* form, with the twisting opening idea returning throughout the movement to punctuate the structure. The gloriously lyrical *Largo* in E flat is followed by a strict *Allegro* over a walking bass, displaying Bach's matchless ability to mould several normally discrete genres – fugue, da capo and *ritornello* form – into a unique structure.

Despite the effort involved in performing such complex and intricate works, it always remains a privilege to explore and share such glorious music – as Forkel wrote of the organ sonatas, 'One cannot say enough of their beauty'.

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The Organ of Pembroke College, Cambridge

The Pembroke College organ contains pipes made by Bernard ‘Father’ Smith, who along with his rival Renuart Harris was one of the two most prominent organ builders of the late seventeenth century. Harris spent his early years in France, and Smith is believed to have worked in Holland before settling in England. Both brought with them innovations such as reeds, mixtures and the cornet stop, which they combined with indigenous characteristics, particularly wooden stopped diapasons (an English preference) and the lack of any pedalboard. The basic design of English organs became relatively standardized by 1700, and it remained so, with minor changes, for most of the subsequent century.

Charles Quarles built the original Pembroke instrument in 1708, and over the years it was enlarged and rebuilt many times, the casework being altered to accommodate it. Most recently, in 1980 N.P. Mander Ltd reconstructed the organ in an attempt to recreate a late seventeenth- or early eighteenth-century English organ. The instrument that survives consists of three complete ranks of Father Smith pipes, brought in by Quarles, and his own casework with its original facade pipes. This, combined with the clear acoustics of Sir Christopher Wren’s 1665 chapel, makes the organ suitable for a diverse range of repertoire.

Great Organ	Chaire Organ	Pedal Organ	
Open Diapason †	8	Bourdon	16
Stopped Diapason †	8	Principal	8
Principal	4	Fifteenth	8
Twelfth	2 2/3	Mixture	IV
Recorder	2	Bass Shawm	16
Tierce	1 3/5	Trumpet	8
Furniture	IV	Great to Pedal	
Cornet (c’)	V	Chaire to Pedal	
Trumpet	8		
Chaire to Great			

Tremulant to manuals

Manuals AA, C-g²

Pedals C-f²

† Stops partly 1708 (may be earlier)

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