



Ricercare a 3

J. S. Bach

From the Musicial Offering

For Keyboard


Typeset by Peter Billam

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The Musical Offering

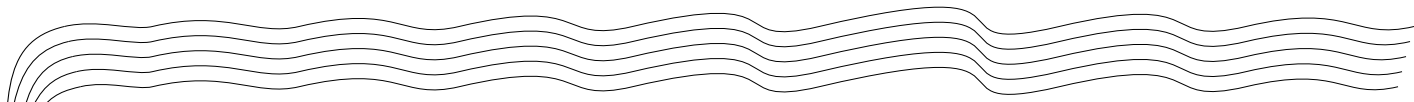
In May of 1747, after finishing the B minor Mass and the second book of the Well-Tempered Clavier, Johann Sebastian Bach travelled to Potsdam, accompanied by his son Wilhelm Friedeman, to visit his successful son Carl Philipp Emmanuel, who was personal harpsichordist to Frederick the Great of Prussia. Johann Sebastian was still a humble schoolteacher; he taught Latin and Music at St Thomas School in Leipzig.

Potsdam was a very musical court. Personal flute teacher to Frederick the Great was Johann Joachim Quantz, the finest flute player in the country, the author of the book "On Playing the Flute", and the only person allowed to find fault with the king's flute playing. Carl Philipp Emmanuel would have spent much time playing music with Quantz, and they must have sounded wonderful. Frederick himself was a fine flute player, and a composer whose works are still played by flute players today.

When Johann Sebastian arrived, the King immediately cancelled the evening's planned concert. He had an extensive collection of harpsichords, and Johann Sebastian, without being given time to change out of his travelling clothes, was ushered from room to room and asked to improvise on each one.

The King also had fifteen of the new fortepianos, which he correctly foresaw as the great new wave in music. They were loud modern inventions, where the strings were so thick that they could not even be plucked, but had to be hit with hammers. Silbermann, of Freyburg, had devised an elaborate mechanism to allow the hammer to rebound even as the key remained pressed. The fortepiano had some of the touch sensitivity of the clavichord, but was loud enough to be played in concert, even in public; however, it could not play vibrato, as the clavichord could. This was the only time that Johann Sebastian played on the new fortepiano, and every piano player since would love to know what he thought of the instrument, and how he played it. Certainly Silbermann was the organ-maker that Johann Sebastian most admired, so the new creation would have been accorded respect.

As is usual with visiting organists, Johann Sebastian was asked to improvise on a given theme. The King sat at the keyboard and played a fine Bach-like theme, rich and dramatic, and asked his guest to improvise a fugue upon it. The King admired the learned treatment of his subject, and asked Johann Sebastian to play it in four, then five, and finally six voices. Nobody knows what Johann Sebastian played in response, and I am sure that it sounded superb, but he probably failed to sustain a six-voice texture, and presumably the King pointed this out.



A six-voice fugue is an almost unheard-of technical challenge – there is none in the Well-Tempered Clavier, for example – and the King's theme, which does not fit in stretto with itself, is particularly unfavourable to treatment in many voices. On the other hand, because of its great eloquence, it is a wonderful subject for a three-voice fugue, and presumably Johann Sebastian pointed this out.

Arnold Schoenberg even suggested that the royal theme had been devised by Carl Philipp Emmanuel as a practical joke, because he knew a six-voice treatment would be impossible. I do think it was written by Carl Philipp Emmanuel, because it shows a superb understanding of Johann Sebastian's style, and is simply too good for the King to have invented. However, I do not think Carl Philipp Emmanuel, at the peak of a brilliant career, and well aware of his father's extraordinary powers, would have felt any need to ridicule him.

The King also desired to hear Johann Sebastian perform on the organ, so the next day he was taken round all the organs in Potsdam. The following day he returned to Leipzig.

The voyage to Potsdam is a defining event in the western musical tradition, because it is the only time Johann Sebastian was accorded public honour, the only time he played the fortepiano, and because it brings him, and all his contrapuntal powers, into contact with the best of the next generation, who were to develop the style which became that of Haydn and Mozart.

Six months later, Johann Sebastian sent to Potsdam a *Musical Offering* which he had had engraved at his own expense. The opening piece is a three voice fugue (*Ricercare a 3*) on the King's theme; this I see as Johann saying to Frederick "When I mentioned that the best setting for this theme was in three voices, this is what I had in mind ..." . The centrepiece is a six voice fugue (*Ricercare a 6*) on the King's theme; this I see as Johann saying to Carl Philipp "You see ? My art is adequate to your test ..." . The finale is a trio sonata, for flute, violin and continuo, largely based on the King's theme, a delight to play, perhaps the greatest and certainly the grandest trio sonata ever written. Between these three pieces are eight smaller ones, all on the King's theme. They include a number of puzzle canons, and the *Fuga Canonica in Epiadiapente* for flute and keyboard.

Then Johann Sebastian Bach turned his attention to the *Art of Fugue*.

Peter Billam

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Ricercare a 3

Measures 1-5 of the Ricercare a 3. The piece is in G minor, 2/2 time. The right hand begins with a series of quarter notes: G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3. The left hand is silent. Fingerings are indicated above the notes: 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 4.

Measures 6-10. Measure 6: Right hand has a trill on G3 (tr) and a quarter note G3. Measure 7: Right hand has a quarter note G3, a quarter note A3, and a quarter note B3. Measure 8: Right hand has a quarter note C4, a quarter note D4, and a quarter note E4. Measure 9: Right hand has a quarter note F4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note A4. Measure 10: Right hand has a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, and a quarter note D5. The left hand has a bass line of G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3. Fingerings are indicated above the notes: 3, tr, 10, 4, 2, 1, 1.

Measures 11-15. Measure 11: Right hand has a quarter note E4, a quarter note D4, and a quarter note C4. Measure 12: Right hand has a quarter note B3, a quarter note A3, and a quarter note G3. Measure 13: Right hand has a quarter note F3, a quarter note E3, and a quarter note D3. Measure 14: Right hand has a quarter note C3, a quarter note B2, and a quarter note A2. Measure 15: Right hand has a quarter note G2, a quarter note F2, and a quarter note E2. The left hand has a bass line of G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3. Fingerings are indicated above the notes: 1, 2, 15, 1, 4, 1, 2, 3, 2, 3, 1.

Measures 16-20. Measure 16: Right hand has a quarter note D3, a quarter note C3, and a quarter note B2. Measure 17: Right hand has a quarter note A2, a quarter note G2, and a quarter note F2. Measure 18: Right hand has a quarter note E2, a quarter note D2, and a quarter note C2. Measure 19: Right hand has a quarter note B1, a quarter note A1, and a quarter note G1. Measure 20: Right hand has a quarter note F1, a quarter note E1, and a quarter note D1. The left hand has a bass line of G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3. Fingerings are indicated above the notes: 1, 1, 20, 2, 4, 1, 3, 3, 4, 1.

Measures 21-25. Measure 21: Right hand has a quarter note C2, a quarter note B1, and a quarter note A1. Measure 22: Right hand has a quarter note G1, a quarter note F1, and a quarter note E1. Measure 23: Right hand has a quarter note D1, a quarter note C1, and a quarter note B0. Measure 24: Right hand has a quarter note A0, a quarter note G0, and a quarter note F0. Measure 25: Right hand has a quarter note E0, a quarter note D0, and a quarter note C0. The left hand has a bass line of G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3. Fingerings are indicated above the notes: 5, 4, 2, 1, 5, 25, 3, 3, 1, 4, 2.

Measures 26-30. Measure 26: Right hand has a quarter note B0, a quarter note A0, and a quarter note G0. Measure 27: Right hand has a quarter note F0, a quarter note E0, and a quarter note D0. Measure 28: Right hand has a quarter note C0, a quarter note B0, and a quarter note A0. Measure 29: Right hand has a quarter note G0, a quarter note F0, and a quarter note E0. Measure 30: Right hand has a quarter note D0, a quarter note C0, and a quarter note B0. The left hand has a bass line of G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3. Fingerings are indicated above the notes: 2, 1, 3, 4, 2, 5, 30, 3, 1, 4, 3, 5, 4, 1, tr.

Measures 1-14 of the Ricercare a 3. The score is in G minor (two flats) and 3/4 time. The right hand features a complex melodic line with many slurs and ornaments, while the left hand provides a steady bass line with triplets and sixteenth-note patterns. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below notes.

Measures 15-28 of the Ricercare a 3. Measure 35 is marked at the beginning of this system. The right hand continues with intricate melodic passages, including a triplet in measure 28. The left hand maintains its rhythmic accompaniment with various note values and rests.

Measures 29-34 of the Ricercare a 3. Measure 40 is marked at the beginning of this system. The right hand has a triplet in measure 29 and a quarter rest in measure 30. The left hand has a quarter rest in measure 30 and continues with its accompaniment.

Measures 35-44 of the Ricercare a 3. Measure 45 is marked at the beginning of this system. The right hand features a triplet in measure 35 and continues with a series of slurred sixteenth-note passages. The left hand has a triplet in measure 45.

Measures 45-49 of the Ricercare a 3. The right hand continues with slurred sixteenth-note passages and a triplet in measure 45. The left hand has a triplet in measure 45 and continues with its accompaniment.

Measures 50-54 of the Ricercare a 3. Measure 50 is marked at the beginning of this system. The right hand has a triplet in measure 50 and continues with slurred sixteenth-note passages. The left hand has a triplet in measure 50 and continues with its accompaniment.

55

60

65

70

75

Ricercare a 3, Musikalisches Opfer, J. S. Bach

The musical score is presented in six systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is G minor (two flats) and the time signature is 3/8. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, slurs, and ornaments. Fingering numbers (1-5) are indicated throughout. Measure numbers 80, 85, 90, and 95 are marked at the beginning of their respective systems. The piece concludes with a final measure in the sixth system.

Musical notation for measures 85-99. The system includes a treble clef and a bass clef. Measure numbers 100, 105, and 110 are indicated above the staff. Fingerings 5, 4, 1, 3, 5, 3 are shown above notes. A trill (tr) is marked in the bass line.

Musical notation for measures 100-114. The system includes a treble clef and a bass clef. Measure numbers 100, 105, and 110 are indicated above the staff. Fingerings 3, 5, 2, 5, 3 are shown above notes. A trill (tr) is marked in the bass line.

Musical notation for measures 110-114. The system includes a treble clef and a bass clef. Measure numbers 110 and 115 are indicated above the staff. Fingerings 2, 3, 2 are shown above notes.

Musical notation for measures 110-114. The system includes a treble clef and a bass clef. Measure numbers 110 and 115 are indicated above the staff. Fingerings 7, 7, 7, 7 are shown above notes.

Musical notation for measures 115-119. The system includes a treble clef and a bass clef. Measure numbers 115 and 120 are indicated above the staff. Fingerings 7, 7, 7, 7 are shown above notes.

Musical notation for measures 120-124. The system includes a treble clef and a bass clef. Measure numbers 120 and 125 are indicated above the staff. Fingerings 7, 7 are shown above notes.

125

130

135

140

Measures 143-145 of the piece. The treble clef part features a complex rhythmic pattern with sixteenth and thirty-second notes, including a trill in measure 143. The bass clef part provides a steady accompaniment with eighth and sixteenth notes.

Measures 146-150. The treble clef part continues with intricate sixteenth-note passages. Measure 150 features a prominent trill. The bass clef part maintains a consistent rhythmic accompaniment.

Measures 151-155. The treble clef part shows a mix of sixteenth-note runs and longer note values. The bass clef part continues with its accompaniment, featuring some rests in measure 152.

Measures 156-160. The treble clef part has a more melodic feel with eighth and sixteenth notes. The bass clef part continues with its accompaniment, including a trill in measure 157.

Measures 161-165. The treble clef part features a series of sixteenth-note runs. The bass clef part continues with its accompaniment, including a trill in measure 162.

Measures 166-170. The treble clef part includes a four-measure phrase in measure 168 and a three-measure phrase in measure 170. The bass clef part continues with its accompaniment, including a trill in measure 167.

165

2 4 5 4 5

1 4 5 3 4 3 1 5

170

5 4 5 4-5 2 1 4 2

1 1 4 3 1 2 5 5

3 2 3 2 2 2 2 1 5 4

4 2 4 2 2 2 2 3 1

175

3 4 3 4 3 1 4

3 2 3 1 2 1 1 3 3 1

180

1 2 3 2 2 4 5 4 5 1

3 1 1 1 1 2 2 2

1 3 3 2 4 5 4 5 1

5 1 2 4 4 4 2

Peter Billam was born in London in 1948, studied piano, and lived in Switzerland from 1973 to 1983, where he studied composition, classical guitar, flute and voice, worked as Musical Director of the *Théâtre Populaire Romand*, and as recording engineer, record producer and computer programmer. He moved to Tasmania in 1983, and lectured in composition at the Conservatorium. He founded www.pjb.com.au, becoming the first composer to sell scores on-line, taking scores from Composer to Performer in one immediate step. *Wwww.pjb.com.au* offers a new approach to music publishing. These pieces are **written to be read, made to be played !**

Compositions at www.pjb.com.au include: *Five Short Pieces*, guitar, 1979; *Divisions on an Italian Ground*, flute and guitar, 1980; *De Profundis* and *Nacht*, on poems by Lama Anagarika Govinda, voice and piano, 1980; *Fünf Bagatellen*, piano, 1980; *Five Rounds*, choir, 1986; *Go Forth and Multiply*, choir, 1986; *Three Violin Duets*, 1987; *Fable*, for piano, 1987; *To Erich Jantsch*, SAATTB recorders, 1988; *A Suite of Curves*, trombone (or horn) and piano, 1990; *Two Recorder Duets*, alto recorders, or other melody instruments, 1991; *Trombone Quintet*, trombone, flute, piano, bass, and percussion, 1994; *Three Songs*, on poems by Jack Kerouac, Vikram Seth and Dylan Thomas, voice and piano (only the first and third of these are available), 1994; *Piano Study*, piano, 1994; *Four Dances*, various ensembles including recorder quartet, string quartet, 1995; *The Poet in the Clouds*, on a poem by S. T. Coleridge, SATB choir, 1995; *Tres Casidas del Diván del Tamarit*, on poems by Federico García Lorca, voice and piano, 1997; *Three Suites*, for the solo line, piano, and piano and a solo line, 2000; *Die Zeiten*, on poems by Kästner, Bachman and Jünger, choir (only the second and third of these are available), 2000; *Three Duets* for flutes, 2001; *For Four Hands* for piano four hands, 2002; *Three Preludes* for piano, 2003; *Second Solo Suite* for flute, violin, viola or cello, 2003; *Guitar Duet* for two guitars, 2006; *We Who Mourn* for choir, 2007; *Trio With Guitar* for guitar and two clarinets or two recorders or two violas, 2008; *Canons* for two- and four-hand piano, 2009; *Flute Trio*, 2012; *Twenty Studies* for piano, 2013-14; *Music for Strings* and *Two Encores for Strings* for 2vln, 2vla, 2vlc, 2015; *Album for Choir*, 2015; *Eight Pieces for Guitar*, 2017.

Arrangements include: By J. S. Bach: *Trio BWV 655*, piano and flute; *Vor deinen Thron BWV 668*, piano; *Fugue in F minor BWV 689*, SATB recorders; *Four Duets BWV 802-5*, keyboard; *Six Preludes and Fugues* from Book I, keyboard; *Flute Sonata BWV 1031* in G major for alto recorder and keyboard; *Flute Sonata BWV 1032* completed by Peter Billam for flute and keyboard, also in C major for alto recorder, and in G major for descant; *Ricercare a 3 of the Musikalisches Opfer* for keyboard; *Ricercare a 6*, for sSATBG recorders, or strings, or two keyboards; and *Fuga Canonica*; from the *Art of Fugue: Contrapuncti 1, 4 and 9* for keyboard, and *Contrapunctus 14* as completed by D. F. Tovey, for keyboard, or for SATB recorders, or for strings; *Passacaglia and Fugue in c* for piano four hands; *Chorales with Descant* for melody instrument and piano; *Cello Suites I, II and III* for flute or alto recorder, *Forty Chorales* for piano, *Der Geist hilft* for SATB-SATB recorders. By Brahms: *Fugue in Ab minor for organ*, for SATB recorders and gamba, in A minor; *Choralvorspiele for organ* plus settings by Isaac, Bach, Praetorius, recorders. *John Carr*; *Divisions on an Italian Ground*, flute or recorder and guitar. Franz Liszt, *Late piano pieces*, G.F. Händel: *Concerto Grosso in A minor* op 6 no 4, harpsichord and recorders; *Recorder Sonata in Bb* no 5, in G for tenor recorder and keyboard. Claudio Monteverdi, *Ecco Mormorar l'Onde*, SSATB recorders. Arnold Schoenberg: *Verklärte Nacht* for piano. Franz Schubert: *Four Songs*, voice and guitar; *Dances*, recorders and guitar, *Dances*, piano 4 hands. Scriabin, *Two Preludes op.67*; *Five Preludes op.74*, piano. Telemann, *Twelve Flute Fantasias*, recorder. Wilbye, *Draw on sweet Night*, SSATTB recorders, and for flute choir. *Twelve Italian Songs* and *Seven English Songs*, voice and guitar; *Folk Guitar Solos*; *Fourteen Folk Dance Tunes*, recorder and guitar; *Bushband Dances*, violin, accordeon and banjo; *Easy Classical Pieces*, Bb trumpet and piano; *Famous Beginnings*, for piano.

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