



Ricercare a 3

J. S. Bach

From the Musicial Offering

For Keyboard

Typeset by Peter Billam

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The Musical Offering

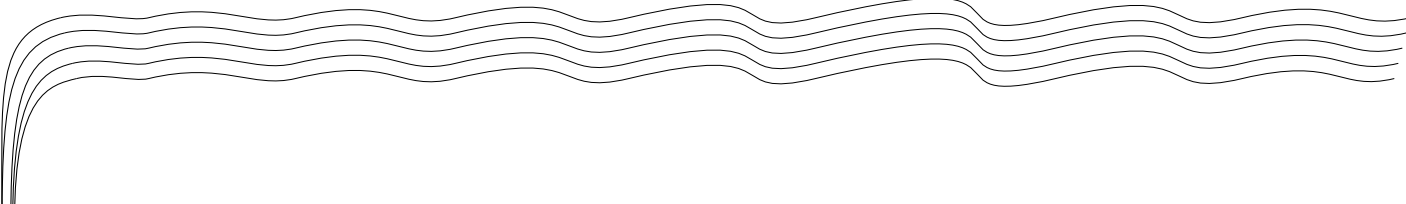
In May of 1747, after finishing the B minor Mass and the second book of the Well-Tempered Clavier, Johann Sebastian Bach travelled to Potsdam, accompanied by his son Wilhelm Friedeman, to visit his successful son Carl Philipp Emmanuel, who was personal harpsichordist to Frederick the Great of Prussia. 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 Epidiapente* 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 3/2 time and B-flat major. The right hand features a melodic line with various ornaments and fingerings (4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 4). The left hand is mostly silent in these measures.

Measures 6-10. Measure 6 includes a trill (tr) and a fermata. Measure 10 is marked with a '10' and contains a trill. Fingerings include 3, 4, 2, 1, and 1.

Measures 11-15. Measure 15 is marked with a '15'. This section contains several sixteenth-note passages and trills. Fingerings include 1, 2, 1, 4, 1, 2, 3, 2, 3, 1, and 1.

Measures 16-20. Measure 20 is marked with a '20'. This section features more complex sixteenth-note patterns. Fingerings include 1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 3, 1, 3, 4, 1, and 1.

Measures 21-25. Measure 25 is marked with a '25'. This section continues with intricate sixteenth-note passages. Fingerings include 5, 4, 2, 1, 5, 1, 3, 1, 4, 2, 3, 1, 4, and 2.

Measures 26-30. Measure 30 is marked with a '30'. This section concludes with a trill in the right hand. Fingerings include 1, 4, 2, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4, 2, 3, 1, 5, 4, 3, 1, 4, 3, 5, 4, 1, and 1.

Musical notation for measures 1-34. The score is in G minor (two flats) and 3/4 time. It features a treble and bass staff. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below notes. Measure numbers 1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, and 35 are marked. The piece is characterized by its complex, chromatic texture and intricate counterpoint.

Musical notation for measures 35-39. The score continues with the same key and time signature. Measure numbers 35, 40, and 45 are marked. The notation includes various rhythmic values and articulation marks.

Musical notation for measures 40-44. The score continues with the same key and time signature. Measure numbers 40, 45, and 50 are marked. The notation includes various rhythmic values and articulation marks.

Musical notation for measures 45-49. The score continues with the same key and time signature. Measure numbers 45, 50, and 55 are marked. The notation includes various rhythmic values and articulation marks.

Musical notation for measures 50-54. The score continues with the same key and time signature. Measure numbers 50, 55, and 60 are marked. The notation includes various rhythmic values and articulation marks.

Musical notation for measures 55-60. The score concludes with the same key and time signature. Measure numbers 55, 60, and 65 are marked. The notation includes various rhythmic values and articulation marks.

55

60

65

70

75

80

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

Musical notation for measures 75-80. The system consists of two staves (treble and bass clef). Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below notes. A tempo marking of 80 is present above measure 80. Measure numbers 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, and 80 are indicated at the top of the system.

Musical notation for measures 81-84. The system consists of two staves (treble and bass clef). Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below notes. Measure numbers 81, 82, 83, and 84 are indicated at the top of the system.

Musical notation for measures 85-88. The system consists of two staves (treble and bass clef). Measure numbers 85, 86, 87, and 88 are indicated at the top of the system.

Musical notation for measures 89-91. The system consists of two staves (treble and bass clef). Measure numbers 89, 90, and 91 are indicated at the top of the system.

Musical notation for measures 92-94. The system consists of two staves (treble and bass clef). Measure numbers 92, 93, and 94 are indicated at the top of the system.

Musical notation for measures 95-97. The system consists of two staves (treble and bass clef). Measure numbers 95, 96, and 97 are indicated at the top of the system.

5 4
1 3 5 3
100

3 5 2 5 3
tr
105

2 3 2

7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7
110

7 7 7 7
115

7 7 7 7
120

The first system of the musical score consists of two staves. The treble staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). It contains several measures of music, including a measure with a fermata over a half note, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The bass staff starts with a bass clef and contains a similar melodic line, often in parallel motion with the treble staff.

125

The second system begins at measure 125. It continues the melodic development from the previous system, with the treble staff showing more complex rhythmic patterns and the bass staff providing a steady accompaniment.

130

The third system starts at measure 130. The treble staff features a prominent melodic line with some grace notes, while the bass staff continues with a consistent rhythmic pattern.

The fourth system continues the piece, showing further development of the musical themes. The treble staff has a more active role with frequent sixteenth-note passages, while the bass staff remains more rhythmic.

135

The fifth system begins at measure 135. The treble staff has a melodic line with some rests, and the bass staff continues with a steady accompaniment.

140

The sixth system starts at measure 140. The treble staff features a melodic line with some grace notes, and the bass staff continues with a consistent rhythmic pattern.

Measures 143-145 of the piece. The music is in G minor (three flats) and 3/8 time. Measure 143 features a treble clef with a sixteenth-note triplet and a bass clef with a half note. Measure 144 continues the melodic line in the treble and has a quarter note in the bass. Measure 145 shows a treble clef with a quarter note and a bass clef with a half note. The number 145 is printed above the treble staff.

Measures 146-150. Measure 146 has a treble clef with a quarter note and a bass clef with a half note. Measure 147 has a treble clef with a quarter note and a bass clef with a half note. Measure 148 has a treble clef with a quarter note and a bass clef with a half note. Measure 149 has a treble clef with a quarter note and a bass clef with a half note. Measure 150 has a treble clef with a quarter note and a bass clef with a half note. The number 150 is printed above the treble staff.

Measures 151-155. Measure 151 has a treble clef with a quarter note and a bass clef with a half note. Measure 152 has a treble clef with a quarter note and a bass clef with a half note. Measure 153 has a treble clef with a quarter note and a bass clef with a half note. Measure 154 has a treble clef with a quarter note and a bass clef with a half note. Measure 155 has a treble clef with a quarter note and a bass clef with a half note. The number 155 is printed above the treble staff.

Measures 156-160. Measure 156 has a treble clef with a quarter note and a bass clef with a half note. Measure 157 has a treble clef with a quarter note and a bass clef with a half note. Measure 158 has a treble clef with a quarter note and a bass clef with a half note. Measure 159 has a treble clef with a quarter note and a bass clef with a half note. Measure 160 has a treble clef with a quarter note and a bass clef with a half note. The number 160 is printed above the treble staff.

Measures 161-165. Measure 161 has a treble clef with a quarter note and a bass clef with a half note. Measure 162 has a treble clef with a quarter note and a bass clef with a half note. Measure 163 has a treble clef with a quarter note and a bass clef with a half note. Measure 164 has a treble clef with a quarter note and a bass clef with a half note. Measure 165 has a treble clef with a quarter note and a bass clef with a half note.

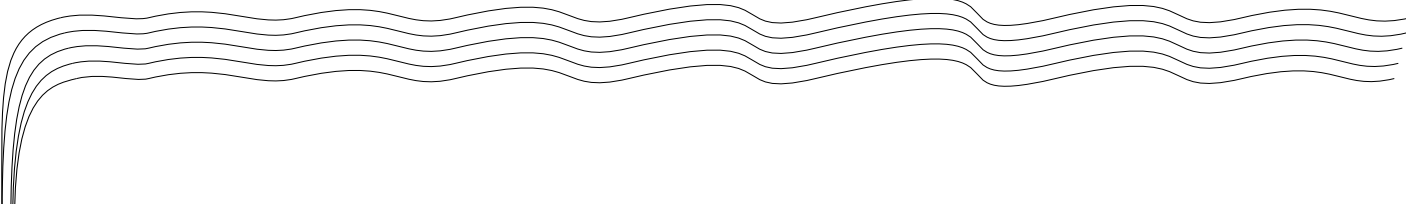
Measures 166-170. Measure 166 has a treble clef with a quarter note and a bass clef with a half note. Measure 167 has a treble clef with a quarter note and a bass clef with a half note. Measure 168 has a treble clef with a quarter note and a bass clef with a half note. Measure 169 has a treble clef with a quarter note and a bass clef with a half note. Measure 170 has a treble clef with a quarter note and a bass clef with a half note. The number 160 is printed above the treble staff.

165

170

175

180



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, lectured in composition at the Conservatorium, conducted recorder ensembles and choirs, studied recorder, voice and harpsichord. He founded **www.pjb.com.au**, becoming the first composer to sell scores on-line, with on-line delivery, taking scores from Composer to Performer in one immediate step. *Www.pjb.com.au* offers new approaches to funding composers and to music publishing. These pieces are **written to be read, made to be played !**

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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; *Flute Sonata BWV 1031* transposed into 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*, from the *Musikalisches Opfer* for keyboard; *Ricercare a 6*, for sSATBG recorders, or strings, or two keyboards; *Fuga Canonica in Epiadiapente* for keyboard and melody instrument; *Contrapunctus 14*, from the *Art of Fugue* 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 Johannes Brahms: *Fugue in Ab minor for organ*, for SATB recorders and gamba, in A minor; *Choralvorspiele for organ* with previous settings by Isaac, Bach, Praetorius, recorders. By Franz Schubert: *Four Songs*, voice and guitar; *Schubert Dances*, recorders and guitar, *Schubert Dances*, piano 4 hands. By other composers: *G. F. Händel, Concerto Grosso in A minor op 6 no 4*, harpsichord and recorders; *Claudio Monteverdi, Ecco Mormorar l'Onde*, SSATB recorders; *Twelve Italian Songs*, voice and guitar; *John Wilbye, Draw on sweet Night*, SSATTB recorders, and for flute choir; *Telemann, Twelve Flute Fantasias*, recorder; *John Carr, Divisions on an Italian Ground*, flute or recorder and guitar; *Fourteen Folk Dance Tunes*, recorder and guitar; *Easy Classical Pieces*, Bb trumpet and piano.

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