

Johann Sebastian Bach - The Art of Fugue, BWV 1080 (2007)

Written by bluesever

Saturday, 17 September 2016 08:50 -

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Disc 1 1 *Contrapunctus 1* 2 *Contrapunctus 2* 3 *Contrapunctus 3* 4 *Contrapunctus 4*
5 *Contrapunctus 5* 6 *Contrapunctus 6, A4 In Stile Francese* 7 *Contrapunctus 7, A4, Per*
Augmentationem Et Dimiutionem 8 *Contrapunctus 8, A3* 9 *Contrapunctus 9, A4, Alla*
Duodecima 10 *Contrapunctus 10, A4, Alla Decima* 11 *Contrapunctus 11, A4* 12 *Canon*
Alla Ottava 13 *Canon Alla Duodecima In Contrapuncto Alla Quinta* 14 *Canon Alla Decima*
Contrapuncto Alla Terza 15 *Canon Per Augmentationem In Contrario Motu* 16
Contrapunctus, A3, Rectus 17 *Contrapunctus, A3, Inversus* 18 *Contrapunctus, A4, Rectus*
19 *Contrapunctus, A4, Inversus* Disc2 1 *Fuga A4 Sogetti (Unvollendet)*
Prelude and Fugue, for organ in C major, BWV 547 (BC J11)
2 *Praeludium* 5:03 3 *Fuga* 5:35
Trio Sonata for organ No. 1 in E flat major, BWV 525 (BC J1)
4 1. (*Allegro*) 3:14 5 2. *Adagio* 5:38 6 3. *Allegro* 4:26
Toccat, Adagio and Fugue, for organ in C major, BWV 564 (BC J36)
7 *Toccat* 5:26 8 *Adagio* 4:36 9 *Fuga* 5:16
Trio Sonata for organ No. 6 in G major, BWV 530 (BC J6)
10 1. *Vivace* 4:26 11 2. *Lento* 5:08 12 3. *Allegro* 4:15
Toccat and Fugue, for organ in D minor, BWV 565 (BC J37)
13 *Toccat: Adagio* 2:35 14 *Fuga* 6:52
Helmut Walcha - organ

1956 recording of Johann Sebastian Bach's The Art of Fugue was the first stereo outing for Deutsche Grammophon, rightly regarded as one of the crowning achievements of the blind German organist who memorized Bach's entire catalog of organ works. Walcha performs on the 1725 Franz Casper Schnitger organ at the Laurenskerk in Altmaar, The Netherlands, one of the best preserved of all Baroque organs; its soundboards, keyboard, and most of the pipes are original to the 1720s. Deutsche Grammophon didn't have a way to issue this stereo recording in 1956, but had the foresight to utilize the technology anyway, as relatively few others did at that time; the stereo LP of The Art of Fugue finally made its bow in 1960. It has always been included in the various incarnations of the big Walcha box set of Bach's complete organ works available throughout the digital era. This separate issue in Archiv Produktion's Original Masters

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series, Helmut Walcha -- Bach: The Art of Fugue, is published to observe the centenary of Walcha's birthdate in 1907.

There are numerous recordings of Bach's valedictory masterwork and nearly as many realizations of its "open" score ranging from the harpsichord that Bach likely intended to realizations for full orchestra. Nevertheless, for a long, long time critics generally considered Walcha's recording the gold standard for The Art of Fugue, and there are compelling reasons why this performance stands apart from the rest. Walcha favored the ordering of the 1927 Bärenreiter edition of the work prepared by Wolfgang Graeser; indeed, Walcha may have attended the first public performance of The Art of Fugue, given in Leipzig in Graeser's orchestral arrangement that same year. Graeser's was the first practical performing edition of the piece, and the concern about making Bach's jumbled score musically sound in practice appears here to override any other concerns. Walcha's use of registration renders all of Bach's sometimes knotty and frequently criss-crossing contrapuntal lines in this work completely clear. As Walcha plays from memory, the emotional content of the performance is natural, unforced, and of great depth. The sound of the Original Masters issue, though analog, is not dated and almost of digital quality in itself; clearly, this master tape has not been handled much, as it comes through clear as a bell, minus the tape hiss and gritty sonics that sometimes plague Deutsche Grammophon's 1950s recordings. This two-disc package is filled out with two trio sonatas, the C major Prelude and Fugue, BWV 547; the Toccata, Adagio and Fugue, BWV 564; and the famous D minor Toccata, all works recorded at the same 1956 sessions that produced The Art of Fugue.

Some unscrupulous record labels have taken advantage of the long period in which this recording was unavailable as a separate performance in issuing Walcha's The Art of Fugue in a cheap, inferior package derived from an LP. Don't be fooled! Archiv Produktion's release is the real deal and should be the only one listeners pursue in order to experience this historically important, and in every way remarkable, recording. --- Uncle Dave Lewis, Rovi

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