

Bach wrote an enormous amount of music for the harpsichord, and also made keyboard transcriptions of music originally written for other instruments. Some of his harpsichord pieces even imitate the sound or style of other instruments – in obvious ways and sometimes in less obvious ways. For example, the *Fantasy and Fugue in a minor* is clearly a work for harpsichord or clavichord, but the fantasy's texture of sustained chords, and its allabreve meter, resemble the *plein jeu* style of 17th and 18th-century French organ music.

The manuscript of the *e minor suite BWV 996* has a curious designation: *aufs Lauten Werck*. A *lautenwerck* was a gentle sounding, lute-like harpsichord with gut rather than metal strings. This suite can be played on the lute or the harpsichord. The *Capriccio on the Departure of the Beloved Brother* is another curiosity. 'Brother' may refer to a friend or classmate, and it is thought that Bach wrote this as a teenager. It is the only known example of Bach notating an instrumental work with narrative text.

The *Ricercar a 3* originates from Bach's visit to Berlin in 1747. His son, Carl Philipp Emmanuel, was in the employ of Frederick the Great, a passionate lover of music. When 'the old Bach' appeared at court, Frederick showed him his new-fangled Silbermann fortepianos and invited him to improvise a six-voice fugue on the emperor's own theme. Instead Bach improvised a three-voice fugue (or *ricercar*), which he later sent to Frederick in written form, adding many other pieces on the emperor's theme. Thus the 'original

instrument' for the *Ricercar a 3* is, in fact, the fortepiano.

In 1720 Bach prepared a fair copy manuscript of his three sonatas and three partitas (or suites) for unaccompanied violin. No other composer has written such sophisticated and complex music for a mere two hands, one bow and four strings. The violin, normally a single-melody instrument, is here required to play counterpoint (several independent melodies at once). Bach adapted portions of this set for solo lute, and other portions for organ, and turned one movement into a concerto for organ and orchestra (the *sinfonia BWV 29*). One entire sonata exists in an 18th-century transcription for harpsichord.

No 18th-century transcription exists of the *Partita BWV 1004*. The *ciaccona* (or *chaconne*) in particular is a tour de force. When I began to prepare my transcription for harpsichord, I realised that Bach had been influenced by the keyboard chaconnes of composers such as Pachelbel and Buxtehude; he had brought idiomatic keyboard motives and textures across to the violin, and it was not too difficult to re-create them again on the keyboard if one thought back to Bach's influences. But Bach had also ventured into completely new territory, incorporating brilliant passages of arpeggio (broken chords), and a harmonic palette of breathtaking richness. In live performance it demands great stamina; I can only be grateful that I have never faced the challenge of playing this masterpiece with just two hands, one bow and four strings.