

# BACH 48

THE COMPLETE WELL-TEMPERED CLAVIER



ORCHID CLASSICS

## **Bach48: Journey Into the Well-Tempered Clavier**

### **Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)**

The Well-Tempered Clavier BWV 846-893

Book I: CDs 1 & 2

Book II: CDs 3, 4 & 5

George Lepauw, piano

Bach48 is a recording audio-produced by Harms Achtergarde, as well as a visual album and a documentary film directed by Martin Mirabel and Mariano Nante. To watch these online, please request your passwords by sending an email to [info@bach48.com](mailto:info@bach48.com) with the subject line "ORC100107 film access request"



Inside the  
Jakobskirche

## BOOK I

### CD 1

1	Prelude No.1 in C major, BWV846	2.59
2	Fugue No.1 in C major, BWV846	1.46
3	Prelude No.2 in C minor, BWV847	2.17
4	Fugue No.2 in C minor, BWV847	1.44
5	Prelude No.3 in C# major, BWV848	1.25
6	Fugue No.3 in C# major, BWV848	2.24
7	Prelude No.4 in C# minor, BWV849	4.32
8	Fugue No.4 in C# minor, BWV849	3.55
9	Prelude No.5 in D major, BWV850	1.38
10	Fugue No.5 in D major, BWV850	2.29
11	Prelude No.6 in D minor, BWV851	1.20
12	Fugue No.6 in D minor, BWV851	1.57
13	Prelude No.7 in E $\flat$ major, BWV852	4.44
14	Fugue No.7 in E $\flat$ major, BWV852	1.58
15	Prelude No.8 in E $\flat$ minor, BWV853	5.05
16	Fugue No.8 in D# minor, BWV853	4.48
17	Prelude No.9 in E major, BWV854	1.58
18	Fugue No.9 in E major, BWV854	1.11
19	Prelude No.10 in E minor, BWV855	3.38
20	Fugue No.10 in E minor, BWV855	1.12
21	Prelude No.11 in F major, BWV856	1.29
22	Fugue No.11 in F major, BWV856	1.25
23	Prelude No.12 in F minor, BWV857	3.15
24	Fugue No.12 in F minor, BWV857	4.16
	<b>Total time</b>	<b>63.35</b>

## CD 2

1	Prelude No.13 in F# major, BWV858	2.39
2	Fugue No.13 in F# major, BWV858	2.03
3	Prelude No.14 in F# minor, BWV859	1.16
4	Fugue No.14 in F# minor, BWV859	4.07
5	Prelude No.15 in G major, BWV860	1.06
6	Fugue No.15 in G major, BWV860	2.49
7	Prelude No.16 in G minor, BWV861	3.37
8	Fugue No.16 in G minor, BWV861	2.24
9	Prelude No.17 in A♭ major, BWV862	1.32
10	Fugue No.17 in A♭ major, BWV862	2.08
11	Prelude No.18 in G# minor, BWV863	2.34
12	Fugue No.18 in G# minor, BWV863	3.22
13	Prelude No.19 in A major, BWV864	1.21
14	Fugue No.19 in A major, BWV864	2.34
15	Prelude No.20 in A minor, BWV865	1.21
16	Fugue No.20 in A minor, BWV865	4.48
17	Prelude No.21 in B♭ major, BWV866	1.47
18	Fugue No.21 in B♭ major, BWV866	1.48
19	Prelude No.22 in B♭ minor, BWV867	3.20
20	Fugue No.22 in B♭ minor, BWV867	3.14
21	Prelude No.23 in B major, BWV868	1.41
22	Fugue No.23 in B major, BWV868	2.01
23	Prelude No.24 in B minor, BWV869	7.15
24	Fugue No.24 in B minor, BWV869	9.16

**Total time**

**70.10**

## **BOOK II**

### **CD 3**

1	Prelude No.1 in C major, BWV870	4.28
2	Fugue No.1 in C major, BWV870	1.44
3	Prelude No.2 in C minor, BWV871	2.22
4	Fugue No.2 in C minor, BWV871	2.35
5	Prelude No.3 in C# major, BWV872	2.40
6	Fugue No.3 in C# major, BWV872	1.34
7	Prelude No.4 in C# minor, BWV873	6.14
8	Fugue No.4 in C# minor, BWV873	2.32
9	Prelude No.5 in D major, BWV874	5.46
10	Fugue No.5 in D major, BWV874	2.26
11	Prelude No.6 in D minor, BWV875	1.31
12	Fugue No.6 in D minor, BWV875	2.10
13	Prelude No.7 in E $\flat$ major, BWV876	3.24
14	Fugue No.7 in E $\flat$ major, BWV876	2.28
15	Prelude No.8 in D# minor, BWV877	4.28
16	Fugue No.8 in D# minor, BWV877	3.25

### **Total time**

**49.53**

### **CD 4**

1	Prelude No.9 in E major, BWV878	6.47
2	Fugue No.9 in E major, BWV878	2.53
3	Prelude No.10 in E minor, BWV879	4.59
4	Fugue No.10 in E minor, BWV879	3.39
5	Prelude No.11 in F major, BWV880	3.20
6	Fugue No.11 in F major, BWV880	1.52
7	Prelude No.12 in F minor, BWV881	6.52
8	Fugue No.12 in F minor, BWV881	2.37

9	Prelude No.13 in F# major, BWV882	4.42
10	Fugue No.13 in F# major, BWV882	3.07
11	Prelude No.14 in F# minor, BWV883	3.47
12	Fugue No.14 in F# minor, BWV883	5.56
13	Prelude No.15 in G major, BWV884	2.29
14	Fugue No.15 in G major, BWV884	1.33
15	Prelude No.16 in G minor, BWV885	4.44
16	Fugue No.16 in G minor, BWV885	4.56
	<b>Total time</b>	<b>64.18</b>

### CD 5

1	Prelude No.17 in A $\flat$ major, BWV886	5.53
2	Fugue No.17 in A $\flat$ major, BWV886	3.08
3	Prelude No.18 in G# minor, BWV887	6.14
4	Fugue No.18 in G# minor, BWV887	4.40
5	Prelude No.19 in A major, BWV888	2.09
6	Fugue No.19 in A major, BWV888	1.40
7	Prelude No.20 in A minor, BWV889	3.44
8	Fugue No.20 in A minor, BWV889	2.01
9	Prelude No.21 in B $\flat$ major, BWV890	9.10
10	Fugue No.21 in B $\flat$ major, BWV890	2.31
11	Prelude No.22 in B $\flat$ minor, BWV891	2.39
12	Fugue No.22 in B $\flat$ minor, BWV891	5.25
13	Prelude No.23 in B major, BWV892	2.39
14	Fugue No.23 in B major, BWV 892	3.33
15	Prelude No.24 in B minor, BWV893	2.29
16	Fugue No.24 in B minor, BWV893	2.33
17	Prelude No.1 in C major, BWV846	2.45
	<b>Total time</b>	<b>63.17</b>

## Bach48 Album Presentation

Recording Johann Sebastian Bach's complete *Well-Tempered Clavier* was born out of my desire to become a more complete musician, and a better human being. While this masterwork is a necessary part of any serious pianist's life, it is also at the root of much of the greatest music that has come since, having deeply influenced composers such as Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Brahms, Debussy, Shostakovich and so many more. Hans von Bülow, the 19th century pianist and conductor, referred to the *Well-Tempered Clavier* as music's "Old Testament", in association with Beethoven's 32 Sonatas as music's "New Testament." It has been my intention to record both of these "testaments" in my journey to be the best musician I can be and delve ever deeper into the mysteries of the human soul. As I send this recording out into the world, I ready myself to begin the Beethoven cycle... For me this is a sacred quest.

*The Well-Tempered Clavier* is the title given to this two volume collection Bach composed between 1717 and 1742, each containing 24 pairs of Preludes and Fugues in all the major and minor keys of the twelve note Western scale, which adds up to 48 pairs of pieces or 96 individual pieces. A prelude is essentially a free improvisation without any predetermined structure, whereas a fugue is a very formal and rule-driven work that interlaces several staggered voices in a contrapuntal adventure emphasizing harmonic struggle before the final resolution of its disparate parts. As a famous keyboardist and organist, Bach was equally known as one of the greatest improvisers of all times and as a masterful composer of fugues: in *The Well-Tempered Clavier* he outdid himself in showcasing his boundless imagination and mastery of the hardest compositional techniques.

Bach had several intentions with this work: to affirm his legacy; to give musicians a model of composition and a wide range of technical challenges; and to convince the musical world that the "well tempered" tuning system of keyboard instruments was the way forward, a major point of debate at that time and a

complex topic you can learn more about in books and on our website. He also used this music to wrestle with every imaginable existential question he might have had, and I have grown to view this work as Bach's very own *Confessions*. The "Bach 48" as it is sometimes known, is a foundation of Western music, akin to the Magna Carta, and upon which musicians have built ever since.

*The Well-Tempered Clavier* plays with notions of time and space through notes and rhythms assembled by Bach the musician architect. The very beginning of this epic, the first Prelude in C Major, progressively brings light out from the shadows, and yet we might be led to think its rolling chords never really have a definite start: like waves in the ocean, they just are. The end of each piece leads us into the next, in a forward motion we do not want to stop, other than to breathe. Each prelude, each fugue, is a work finite yet always generator of the next adventure. That is why I felt it necessary to play the very first piece of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* again, the very same opening Prelude in C Major, after the very last fugue in this recording: the end of the journey is not final, cannot be final, but is an opportunity to engage another loop in the infinity of our life experience, of our universe. Try again! There is more to learn, and there are more treasures to be found. Indeed, no two traversals are the same, which is as true for the performer as it is also for the listener. This music is meant to be heard, listened to, felt deep inside, and as often as possible. The meaning of life itself is to be found in this music, if one's heart is truly open... This is a soul awakener, and a loyal companion to our lives under all circumstances.

I did not jump into this recording project unprepared. In addition to decades of practice and years of studying *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, I felt it necessary to gain greater insight into Johann Sebastian Bach's experience of the world and to understand the origin of his greatest masterwork. Hence I set out to explore the region of Thuringia, Germany in the Winter of 2017, retracing Bach's footsteps in the places where he grew up, worked, and died. These travels



convinced me to return to Germany six months later to record the entire *Well-Tempered Clavier* in the Jakobskirche, Weimar's oldest church, a few blocks from where Bach had served as Konzertmeister at the ducal court of Saxe-Weimar and near the local Bastille prison where he had been detained for four weeks in 1717. This imprisonment at the age of thirty-two dramatically ended Bach's tenure in Weimar, but also gave him time to meditate on where he stood in his life, and to envision what he still wanted to achieve: it was while in jail that he developed his initial idea for *The Well-Tempered Clavier*...

I did not want this album to be limited to a straightforward, traditional recording, as in this 21st century it is increasingly difficult to reach younger listeners. Today, visual content and narrative are critical to reaching an audience in order to share one's passion, hard work and more importantly, the great masterworks of the past. Thus, I conceived the Bach48 Album to include, in addition to the audio, a film version of the recording as well as a special documentary film which details my explorations of Bach's Germany, bringing the audience along in the (re)discovery of *The Well-Tempered Clavier's* origin story.

Directed by Martin Mirabel and Mariano Nante, the *Voyage Into the Well-Tempered Clavier* film follows me from Bach's birthplace in Eisenach to his grave in Leipzig, passing through other important sites along the way including the very prison cell where Bach was held in 1717, three hundred years before I made the recording. This was a most moving experience for me personally, helping me feel closer to Bach the man in all his imperfect glory, and giving me plenty of material beyond pure music to absorb before attempting this recording.

The conditions under which this album was made were unique in my life, simultaneously deeply challenging as well as wonderfully satisfying. The greatest difficulty was overcoming the emotional pain of losing my paternal aunt Nicole Lairy-Lepaw just six weeks before the start of the recording, an incredible

woman who was such an important part of my life and whose humanism, constant curiosity, and love of music made our many conversations and shared experiences ever thrilling. To her memory I dedicate this Bach48 Album.

I was lucky, through all this, to have had the best team anyone could hope for in this type of adventure. Audio producer Harms Achtergarde was a true joy to work with, a man of great talent, professionalism, patience, and passion whose ear was infallible. I felt that we were both focused on bringing the best out of this music and out of me. The recording was also made in front of cameras, and while in most situations this would prove to be a frustrating distraction and constraint, filmmakers Martin Mirabel and Mariano Nante gave me the support I needed to be at ease. Each one of them in his own unique way added his spirit to this recording, pushing me to be at my best, telling me when I fell short but also giving me heartfelt congratulations, and hence confidence, when I outdid myself. Harms, Martin and Mariano understood my musical vision perfectly, which gave me greater strength to achieve it. Anne Ludwig was our discreet assistant who helped us all accomplish this tremendous project in just five full days and nights, in the unparalleled intimacy of the Jakobskirche (well-known to Bach) which became our temporary home that magical Summer week.

Bach's name in German means "brook" or "stream". While perhaps apocryphal, Beethoven who admired Bach without limit is thought to have said (but certainly someone said so, if not him!): "Nicht Bach, sondern Meer sollte er heißen..." ("Not brook, but rather ocean should he be called..."). In truth, Bach is pure infinity and multiplicity, brook and ocean all at once, and his declinations in music are as rich as the myriad forms and states of water. His music flows always, renews itself endlessly, cycles through the atmosphere and comes back to us refreshed and filtered, allowing us to fill ourselves with it. Notes and rhythms form currents and countercurrents, raging tempests and placid ponds, hidden sources and river rapids, creating rich ecosystems filled with life, where even

death feeds back into the evolutionary spiral. In Bach's music, optimism is ever-present, and the sun rises always, no matter how frightful the demons, or how deep the suffering. Through my time navigating his music, I have come to realize that we need Bach for our souls just as much as we need water for our bodies.

There is so much more to say about this multi-year and deeply rewarding project, about the amazing people who have been involved far and wide from Chicago to Weimar, Buenos Aires to Paris, and beyond; and of course there is just so much to say about Bach and this music. There are magical stories about Baltic cocktail parties, flying parasols and mediaeval beer, about life and death, about finding ground in times of upheaval, about following hidden signs and falling in love, and of discovering the only piano this recording could be made on, 850 kilometers away from the recording venue... Because this space is finite, my passionate team and I built a companion website to continue sharing all those stories and bring lovers of Bach together.

This project could not have been made in the real world without the support of the foundations and donors who so generously contributed to its success and trusted my vision, all of whom are thanked at the end of this booklet. Of note I must make particular mention of, and express my deep gratitude to, those whose true friendship and essential early and significant support got this project off the ground: Christopher Hunt, Herbert Quelle, Chaz Ebert, and Tim and Paula Friedman. I have also been lucky to have had the unflinching and loving support of my family, which has meant so much to me over the years of ups and downs. The dedication I have put into this project is an expression of all the goodwill I have received to bring it into existence, and I consider the Bach48 Album to be a co-creation of all those who have taken part in it. Lastly, I am most excited to release this seminal album with Orchid Classics, thanks to its visionary leader Matthew Trusler. To all who have had a part in this adventure, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Please visit, sign-up, recommend, and stay connected to the Bach48 Album and all things *Well-Tempered Clavier* at [www.bach48.com](http://www.bach48.com).

I especially hope you, too, find meaning in this recording of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*.

*George Lepauw, Paris, August 2019*

### **The International Beethoven Project, producer of BACH48**

A non-profit organization founded in Chicago in 2008, the International Beethoven Project (IBP) works to bring the world of classical music into the 21st century for the benefit of all generations. Just as Beethoven launched a musical revolution two centuries ago by composing music for humanity in the idealistic spirit of the Enlightenment, IBP is committed to innovative approaches to make classical music culturally relevant to our times. IBP has produced extraordinary events including one-of-a-kind multidisciplinary festivals, educational programmes, Beethoven Birthday Bashes, recordings, podcasts, and films. IBP is deeply committed to celebrating Beethoven's 250th anniversary in 2020 and engaging audiences everywhere. More information at [www.internationalbeethovenproject.com](http://www.internationalbeethovenproject.com).

## **George Lepauw, project leader and pianist**

"A prodigious pianist" (*Chicago Tribune*) recognized for his "singing tone" (*New York Times*), and someone who "likes to shake it up" (*Chicago Tribune*), George Lepauw is an artist and cultural activist who uses music and the arts to inspire and bring people together, following upon Beethoven's idea of "brotherhood". Named Chicagoan of the Year (2012) for Classical Music (*Chicago Tribune*), George represents the ideal 21st century musician, intensely focused on his art and wholly engaged with the world. In 2009 he had the honour of giving the World Premiere performance of a newly-discovered long-lost piano trio of Beethoven's to great acclaim, which was followed by a highly-praised first recording with the Beethoven Project Trio for Cedille Records. In addition to his performance career, George is the Founder and President of the International Beethoven Project non-profit organization. From 2016 to 2018, George was Executive Director of the Chicago International Movies & Music Festival (CIMMfest), which allowed him to deepen his passion for film, an artform he has occasionally participated in as a producer, composer, and musician for over a decade. George, who grew up in France in a musical family (his grandfather Roger Lepauw was Principal Viola of the Paris Opera Orchestra as well as of the Orchestre de Paris; his father Didier Lepauw was First Violin with the Orchestre de Paris) began piano studies at the age of three in Paris with Aïda Barenboim (mother of pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim), and furthered his studies with Elena Varvarova, Brigitte Engerer, Vladimir Krainev, Rena Shereshevskaya, James Giles, Ursula Oppens, and Earl Wild, among others. He has degrees from Georgetown University (B.A. in Literature and Film Studies, and History), and from Northwestern University (M.M. in Piano Performance). George is a frequent speaker and guest teacher at universities and "ideas festivals" as well as on radio and television, and also teaches piano to a select number of private students. To stay up to date with George's work, please visit [www.georgelepauw.com](http://www.georgelepauw.com).

## **A few words by filmmaker Martin Mirabel**

Johann Sebastian Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* is one amongst just a few mythical works of the classical repertoire. Its two Books are the Alpha and Omega of all music for keyboard. It is a true challenge and a work that demands the best from each of us. To record and to film in five days the entire *Well-Tempered Clavier*, are an opportunity that do not come often in a lifetime! In the beautiful Summer of 2017, the situation was ideal: Weimar, a small town in Germany's central region of Thuringia, beautifully preserved, lively, calm, and with an inspiring atmosphere. And then this very special church, the Jakobskirche, in which we literally lived for five days.

I met George in Chicago in August of 2016, while shooting an entirely different music documentary. We saw each other again nearly a year later in Paris and he told me about his project. Then, very naturally and through coincidences which are not so happenstance, I joined the adventure. Since then, George Lepaw has made Europe his base again after a fifteen year absence. From Chicago to Paris, Weimar will have been the intermediary stage, and the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, perhaps, the trigger and the free pass.

*The Well-Tempered Clavier* is a work we very rarely have the opportunity to hear live, all at once. This was the first time for me. Rather than pick preludes and fugues here and there, this gave me the chance to realize the perfect internal coherence of this work as such. *The Well-Tempered Clavier* is like a perfect world. A world in which we would like never to stop living in and to evolve. A world of mathematics but with heart. Johann Sebastian Bach is one of those names automatically associated with genius, to the point where we sometimes forget the meaning and the man hiding behind the creator.

The adventure was complete because, not content to film the entire recording sessions of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* (the work), we went all around Thuringia

on the footsteps of the composer (the life). We were thus able to discover and film his native town of Eisenach and the Wartburg fortress, as well as villages like Arnstadt and Ohrdruf and of course, Leipzig, not to forget Weimar the beloved, which I knew already and from long ago for other reasons.

Musically, this adventure brought me much closer to the man who was Bach in general and to the *Well-Tempered Clavier* in particular. Thanks to George and his sensitive interpretation, free, aerie and munificent, this work has become familiar to me and I now listen to it regularly. I hope it will be the same for all who will discover these films and this recording.

Martin Mirabel, Paris, July 2019

### **A few words by filmmaker Mariano Nante**

Witnessing George Lepauw record the five hours of *the Well-Tempered Clavier* was an experience I will certainly never forget. The setting was the best one could imagine: a modest mainly-wooden church in Weimar where Bach himself had played the organ, where Goethe had gotten married, and where the great Lucas Cranach was buried. In this charming church, imbued with the presence of these old masters, a small crew of four people, myself included, worked for less than a week to produce this record and these films.

George had set out to do the impossible: to record five hours of music in only five days. And not just any five hours of music, but what one could call the Bible of the keyboard, one of the most challenging works in existence for the instrument. Not many pianists have attempted this, and one could say there are very few recordings that live up to Bach's musical monument. Was George too naïve to think he could actually run this musical marathon in such a short time? I admit that this was my first thought while the piano was being moved into the church.

Harms Achtergarde set up his microphones and Martin Mirabel and I set up our cameras and waited. From George's first note, it became clear to me that this apparently crazy idea was nothing else than the logical conclusion to years and years of working on this music, of playing it live, of studying it carefully. A life of devotion and study of Bach, and now he was ready to offer it as his most precious gift to us. I felt so lucky to be there, especially with a camera in my hands.

The recording process was quite tiring: for more than twelve hours a day, George played the preludes and fugues while we filmed and recorded each of his movements and sounds. The filming never stopped: Martin and I would shoot George while he did qi gong, while he got dressed, while he ate bananas between takes, and while he walked back to our hotel in the middle of the night, beer in hand to relax. At the end of each day, George would share his impressions for the cameras: he talked freely about his joys, his doubts, his fears, leaving nothing to himself.

I remember being absolutely awestruck by George's inner peace, his sense of purpose and his never-changing good mood, even when things didn't seem to go as planned. Time was running out quickly, but George always showed a peaceful smile. And when his hands were on the piano, his warm, honest sound would put me into a meditative state. Bach seemed to be smiling at us through George's fingers.

After those intense days in Weimar, we all became close friends. This recording and these films are not only the result of George's talent, commitment and artistry, but also the fruit of our blossoming friendships and positive energy, which pervaded those memorable days and nights. I think you will also feel that when listening to, and watching, what we did then.

Mariano Nante, Buenos Aires, July 2019



## **A few words by Herbert Quelle**

"Back to Bach!" comes easily to our lips. Watching the Bach48 documentary and listening to this wonderful recording of both books of *the Well-Tempered Clavier*, the exclamation "Forward to Bach, forward forever!" seems, however, more appropriate. This would reflect much better the spirit in which pianist George Lepauw has obviously pursued his incredible project of passion. "My craziness has a reason to be," he replies to the question about what he has learned about himself after finishing his tour de force of focus and concentration.

Developing the idea of traveling from Chicago to a church in Weimar to put up a grand piano and record these works is one matter; implementing it is a completely different story. The Consulate General of Germany in Chicago is extremely happy to have believed in Mr. Lepauw and grasped the occasion of being a partner in this great endeavor from the very beginning. Mr. Lepauw's humanism, his enthusiasm for Ludwig van Beethoven and Johann Sebastian Bach and his skills as an interpreter of their music had been known all along. The result nevertheless surpasses our expectations.

The unique and soulful audio reflection on 48 "expressions of the human condition," as George says, will satisfy the most discerning connoisseurs. Beyond this, the subjective view on Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* in the video is most informative. The release of this album in the Year of German-American Friendship is a fortunate coincidence. It is a must-have for lovers of music, and while grounded in the baroque, nonetheless contains eternal truths.

Herbert Quelle, Consul General of Germany, Chicago



### A few words by composer Stéphane Delplace

What more can be attempted after so many recordings over nearly a century, amongst which are the mythical ones by Edwin Fisher, Rosalyn Tureck, Sviatoslav Richter, Glenn Gould... ? George Lepauw, who has scrupulously listened to them all, made a decision to start by forgetting them so that he could give himself the best chance to reappraise, for himself, this "monument."

And rather than preoccupy himself with elaborating an enth version of reference, he set himself up to invent a new psychology at the very foot of this mountain. He looks at each piece as if he had, in a sense, written it himself, and gives us the extraordinary feeling that the composer is there, in front of us, putting his feet back into his own footprints. Notably at the beginning of many preludes (as if improvised), he seems to bring back to his memory, at the keyboard, his very first idea, then, soon strengthening his thought, gets excited, thrilled to recognize his own music!

As if to better feel and increase its musical veracity, George did not fear going to the very places where this music was conceived, to the point of choosing to record on site, and finding there a sound of great purity, whatever the chosen dynamic in the infinite palette of his touch. And the rarest thing is that he makes us feel that Bach, the contrapuntist, is in fact above all a harmonist, who forces his counterpoint to go, whatever the cost, through the needle's eye of his harmonic willpower.

From there is born (and it's so rare!) an infinitely moving Bach, a bit painful, almost sorry, an unconditional lover of this third degree which overwhelms us with its soft melancholy; sending us without fail to Emil Cioran, the thinker who will have written Bach's most beautiful declarations of love, of which we must cite a few: "Only Bach is able to reconcile me with death. The funeral note is always present with him, even in joy. (...) In agony he cries of joy – Bach is often that."

But then in the next instant, George conveys a horn call, or else quick, pronounced and rhythmically implacable strings. "With Bach, exultation and desolation are equally true, equally frequent." George, who evidently does not know any limits of virtuosity, decides very simply to obey all that his sure-footed instinct dictates, delivering us here a Bach as alive as he can be, in his most human depth.

*The Well-Tempered Clavier*, which at first only circulated in handwritten copies amongst initiates for decades (composed between 1717 and 1742, the first edition was published much later, in 1801), fell in the hands successively of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Chopin, Brahms... who all made it their Bible. A fascinating draft of the work published by Bärenreiter (edition number 5070) shows, however, a number of hesitations in Bach's composition process, notably in the very first preludes, not yet in their final idealized form, and clearly unaware that they would soon be part of the most mythical corpus in all of music history.

It is worth noting that the twenty-four fugues of the first Book already contain their definitive number of bars, and only some accidentals remain uncertain, which says a lot about the determinism of this form. This mathematical total delivers, in passing, the most beautiful composition course there is: a Bach at work, always moving toward the better, mind-boggling in his everlasting quest for more beauty! No divine dictation, clearly, but rather a "man" in love with perfectionism, never giving away hard logic within the context of a harmonic system based on weak and expressive degrees of the musical scale, as he is most focused on creating an emotional response. Additionally, this music is without a doubt the most dissonant ever written, as slowly playing a few bars clearly shows that it "rubs and bangs" everywhere, and that it is precisely this permanent audacity which makes it so profound and intemporal.

If I dare to mention my personal story here, it is because, like many musicians, it is closely linked to this work of music. I remember that at the start of my life as

a composer, a student said to me one day: "When I open the Well-Tempered Clavier, I close it right away, as it immediately makes me want to change professions...". I think I did the exact opposite of this arrogant reaction, and said to myself instead: "Here is the profession I most want to do!". One of the rare pieces of advice attributed to Bach is: "To do what I did, it is sufficient to work." Thinking about the first part of this sentence reveals to us the artisan, happy with his work, naturally imagining that others may have the desire to do what he did. All of Bach's dedications prove to us that he is addressing himself as much to composition apprentices as he is to interpreters, and the thought that such a model may serve to repulse anyone probably never even appeared in his mind.

Thirty-five years later and with three centuries of distance, I am very aware that to have composed (as I have) three books of Preludes and Fugues in the Thirty Tonalities may make some smile, but I have always considered that "things" would be born out of the deep study of the processes Bach put into play with these works. Having always considered that this work shows the way more than any other, I could not resist the desire to put myself, humbly, in search of ideas susceptible of generating this same type of treatment, and only wish more people would do so. This is also perhaps the reason why the way George goes about this music moves me so much; it's that instead of telling myself as I always do: "How sad it is that he didn't write it!", I have the sentiment that it is born there, entirely his, under my amazed eyes.

Let us borrow one more time some definitive formulations by Cioran: "Bach remains no matter what the greatest encounter I will have made here-below." And "if anyone owes anything to Bach, it is in fact God."

*Stéphane Delplace*

Mr. Delplace is a composer based in Paris, France. Learn more at [www.stephanedelplace.com](http://www.stephanedelplace.com).

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In memoriam, with love and gratitude

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The Bach48 Album is dedicated in loving memory of Nicole Laury-Lepauw

## **Bach48: Voyage Into the Well-Tempered Clavier**

George Lepauw, *piano*

Harms Achtergarde, *audio producer*

Martin Mirabel & Mariano Nante, *film directors*

Céline Oms, *photographer*

Javier Reboursin, *graphic designer*

A production of the International Beethoven Project

This recording was made at the Jakobskirche in Weimar, Germany, between August 21-26 of 2017 on a Steinway D from Régie Pianos France, using SCHOEPS microphones with a classical 5 channel surround setup for the room and a pair of closeup mikes. The microphones were connected with short cables directly to the HAPI interface, for most accurate mic-preamps with an outstanding AD converter quality, and connected via RAVENNA network directly to the PYRAMIX digital audio workstation. The documentary film was shot in the region of Thuringia, Germany, in the towns of Eisenach, Ohrdruf, Arnstadt, Weimar and Leipzig, as well as in Paris, France between August 20th, 2017 and September 2018. Film editing was done primarily in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The Bach48 Album photos of George Lepauw were taken at Rens Lipsius Ideal Artist House Nr. 2 in Paris by Céline Oms, who also took the photo of Mariano Nante and Martin Mirabel.

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