

**The New Editions of Bach's Complete Organ Works**  
David Schulenberg (Wagner College and The Juilliard School)  
American Guild of Organists, National Convention (Boston, June 26, 2014)

**The new Breitkopf und Härtel edition: series contents (from publisher's website)**

Bach, Johann Sebastian (1685-1750)

## Complete Organ Works - Breitkopf Urtext

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## The new Breitkopf edition: contents of volume 1

### Inhalt / Contents

Vorwort . . . . .	5	Anhang	
Preface . . . . .	6	Fuga in D . . . . . BWV 532/2a . . . . .	112
Einleitung . . . . .	7	Kommentar . . . . .	119
Introduction . . . . .	14		
Praeludium in C . . . . . BWV 531 . . . . .	17	CD-ROM	
Praeludium et Fuga in C . . . . . BWV 545 . . . . .	24	Fuga in C Frühfassung . . . . . BWV 545a/2	
Trio . . . . . BWV 529/2 . . . . .	30	Praeludium in B Variante . . . . . BWV 545b	
Praeludium in C Frühfassung . . . . . BWV 545a/1 . . . . .	36	Commentary	
Praeludium et Fuga in C . . . . . BWV 547 . . . . .	38		
Praeludium in C . . . . . BWV 566 . . . . .	48		
Praeludium in E . . . . . BWV 566 . . . . .	60		
Praeludium et Fuga in c . . . . . BWV 546 . . . . .	73		
Praeludium in c . . . . . BWV 549 . . . . .	86		
Praeludium in d . . . . . BWV 549a . . . . .	92		
Praeludium et Fuga in D . . . . . BWV 532 . . . . .	98		

## The new Breitkopf edition: introduction to volume 1 (English)

### Introduction

The organ preludia (or preludes and fugues) of Johann Sebastian Bach are so fundamental to the modern organist's repertory, and indeed to European and world music generally, that it would be superfluous to offer a detailed discussion of them here.<sup>1</sup> A new edition, however, raises several points for discussion, including the basis of the edition and how it differs from previous ones.

As familiar as they may seem today, these works when new had no exact antecedents. Buxtehude and other north-German organist-composers before Bach had composed preludia and toccatas that were somewhat similar in form and in the use of independent pedal parts. But in many respects Bach's works were unprecedented, and like all new types of music they raised problems of notation and performance that the composer himself may have solved only gradually, over the course of a long career during which he not only composed new works but revised and re-notated early ones. For example, to what degree the lowest part was indeed independent and assigned exclusively to the pedals is not always clear, especially in early works. Although older tablature notation generally made voice leading clear, how to distinguish the pedal part from the lowest manual part when writing in score was a notational problem that Bach seems never to have satisfactorily solved in the present works. He apparently always wrote his preludia (or preludes and fugues) on two staves, and thus the frequent crossing of the two lowest parts often led to problems of legibility. Moreover, the occasional entry of the word *Pedal* (or its equivalent) against the lowest part did not clarify precisely where the feet should begin playing or the left hand cease. Notation of organ music on three staves, which Bach used only for trios and certain types of chorale settings, did not become common until the 19th century; until then, some copyists distinguished the pedal part by the use of red ink.

More fundamentally, Bach may never have settled exactly what to call these works. The 17th-century title "Praeludium" might apply to compositions in any number of sections, but most of the present works comprise the now-familiar two-movement sequence of prelude and fugue. Hence the principal sources for these pieces most often designate them in Latin as "Praeludium cum Fuga" or the like. Yet the latter is not an exact equivalent for "Prelude and Fugue"; rather it suggests that the entire work was still understood as a prelude that includes or incorporates a fugue, or to which a fugue is attached. Other titles appear as well in the sources, especially in earlier ones, leaving it unclear whether all of the pieces now understood as "preludes and fugues" were always regarded as such by Bach or even as belonging to the same genre. One early work, the *Praeludium in C* (or E) BWV 566, retains an archaic four-movement form; another, the *Praeludium in C* BWV 545, was apparently expanded to three movements for an uncertain period of time. The question of title might be settled if we understood how Bach and his contemporaries actually used these pieces – as preludes or postludes to services, as audition pieces, as elements of concert and recital programs. But we have surprisingly little information about how any individual examples

of these pieces were used. By the same token, efforts to relate individual compositions to the keyboard compasses of specific organs on which they might have been played are at best speculative, and in some cases have been based on questionable assumptions about the states of historical organs at particular times.

Although they have been published in numerous forms since the 19th century, Bach's organ preludia have been subjects of only a few genuinely critical editions. All such editions belong to a tradition that began with the composer's own fair-copy manuscripts, that is, revised copies of his first drafts or composing scores. The tradition continued with manuscript copies made by Bach's pupils and other associates, some of whom, such as Johann Gottlieb Walther and Johann Caspar Vogler at Weimar, were probably already engaged in conscious editing. Such copyists might have altered what they perceived to be wrong notes as well as misleading or incomplete notation; they may also on occasion have added such signs as ornaments, accidentals, and pedal indications, in a conscientious but potentially misleading effort to preserve the composer's intentions. The tradition continued in later generations, extending to Christian Friedrich Gottlieb Schwencke and Johann Nicolaus Forkel, who published first editions of a number of Bach's keyboard works in the early 19th century. Subsequent editors, including those responsible for the first collected editions of Bach's works later in the century, were heavily influenced by their predecessors. In particular, 19th-century editors often assumed that copies made by their immediate predecessors, which were frequently neater and more explicit in certain aspects of notation than earlier manuscripts, were reliable witnesses for revisions made late in life by the composer. We know from the multiple autographs surviving for portions of the *French Suites* and the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, as well as from corrected exemplars of the original printed editions of the *Clavierübung*, that Bach did make numerous alterations to certain works. But the loss of primary sources for most of the organ preludia makes it impossible to verify Bach's responsibility for many readings that are found only in manuscript copies of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Although early editors generally accepted these readings, many of the latter cannot reflect the original notation of these works, especially in early compositions such as BWV 531 and 566.

Every edition reflects not only the state of knowledge but the assumptions of its editors. The first collected edition of Bach's works, carried out during the 19th century by the *Leipzig Bachgesellschaft*, was made in large part by organists whose teachers, or whose teachers' teachers, personally knew or had studied with pupils of Bach or his sons. These editors had first-hand knowledge of manuscript traditions, having studied many of these pieces in copies made in the 18th or early 19th centuries. Yet Bach's autograph manuscripts for most of these works were already lost, and those that did survive appear to have been fair copies, hence providing no information about the original forms of the works or their dates of composition. At a time of great confidence in the idea of progress, which extended to the idea that musical composition and performance were constantly improving, 19th-century editors sought Bach's final readings, often finding them in relatively recent manuscript copies that they believed to represent his latest revisions. In a few instances they also found such readings in

<sup>1</sup> Recent guides include Peter Williams, *The Organ Music of J. S. Bach*, Cambridge, 2003; and *Bach's Klavier- und Orgelwerke*, ed. by Siegbert Rampe, 2 vols., Laaber, 2007/2008.



## The new Breitkopf edition: commentary to volume 1 (English)

### Commentary

Bach's organ works are preserved in literally hundreds of sources, mostly manuscript copies from the 18th and 19th centuries. This commentary provides descriptions, discussions of textual relationships, and lists of variant readings only for the most important of the sources used for the present volume. Unless otherwise noted, these sources are manuscripts in upright format with systems of two staves, the upper staff using treble clef. Most have been examined in microform; some have also been seen in person in Berlin and New Haven. Information about physical characteristics, copyists, and owners, as well as textual readings in certain sources, is derived from the following publications:<sup>1</sup>

*J. S. Bach's Werke, Gesamtausgabe der Bach-Gesellschaft*, Leipzig, 1851–1899, especially vols. 15 (ed. by Wilhelm Rust, 1867) and 38 (ed. by Ernst Naumann, 1891) [BG].

*Johann Sebastian Bach, Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke* (known as the *Neue Bach-Ausgabe*), edited by the Johann-Sebastian-Bach-Institut Göttingen, and the Bach-Archiv Leipzig, Kassel, 1954ff., especially the critical reports (*Kritische Berichte*) for vols. IV/5+6 (ed. by Dietrich Kilian, 1978–1979) [NBA, KB].

*Die Bach-Sammlung: Katalog und Register nach Paul Kast: Die Bach-Handschriften der Berliner Staatsbibliothek, 1958, vollständig erweitert und für die Mikrofiche-Edition ergänzt*, ed. by the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Munich, 2003).

The sources for each work can be divided into four categories: a *principal source* used to establish the copy text; *secondary sources* that provide independent confirmation for readings from the principal source, as well as corrections where the latter is erroneous or incomplete; *additional sources* whose text is dependent on that of the principal or secondary sources, but which occasionally supplement readings or are of special interest for the reception of a work; and *sources not consulted* for this edition but reported in the literature. A fifth category comprises *sources now lost* or known to have been destroyed; information about these is furnished primarily by older editions. Only principal and secondary sources receive complete descriptions below.

#### Abbreviations

NA Present new edition  
Ped Pedal  
SBB Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung

In individual entries within the lists of variant readings, staves are identified by Roman numerals; where necessary, Arabic numerals describe individual parts within the staves (I 2 = 1st staff, 2nd part). These indications pertain to the notation of the present edition. Individual measures are usually cited in the form “m. x/y,” where x is the movement number (“1” = prelude, “2” = fugue), y is the measure number.

When not otherwise noted, comments describe differences between readings of the principal source for each work and the present edition.

In general, the lists of variant readings are restricted to (1) errors in the principal sources that the edition emends; and (2) readings from secondary sources that may represent early or alternate versions of a work.

The sources usually omit rests for voices that are silent for more than a measure or two. The NA adds rests in small type, but only where these are clearly implied by the voice leading. Particularly in earlier works, the number of voices is often ambiguous or is not maintained consistently; where this is the case, the NA refrains from adding rests or prescribing a particular form of voice leading.

The sources indicate the use of pedals in various ways. Pedal indications in the principal source are described at the beginning of the textual commentary for each work. Original clefs and staves are shown at the beginning of the first system in the score of each work. The NA places pedal parts on a separate third staff where these can be clearly identified.

Sincere thanks are due to all the libraries, in particular the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz and the Bach-Archiv Leipzig, for providing the sources as well as for granting permission for publication.

#### Praeludium in C BWV 531

##### Sources

Principal source: *Möller* (= SBB, *Mus. ms. 40644*), fols. 58v–60v: *Praeludium Pedaliter* [space] *Johann Sebastian Bach* (attribution is in smaller and lighter script). Copyist: Johann Christoph Bach (1671–1721), probably during the period 1703–1708. Oblong format.

Secondary sources: *Kellner* (SBB, *Mus. ms. Bach P 274*), fascicle 3: *Praeludium Pedaliter* [space] *Johann Sebastian Bach*. Copyist: Johann Peter Kellner (1705–1772), ca. 1725. Top staff in soprano clef. Prelude with shortened version of fugue.

*Sichart* (Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, II, fol. 288), fols. 1v–2r. Title page (fol. 1r): *Hierinnen ist eine Fantasie oder Prael- | dium mit dem Pedal ex C# | Ein Praeludium nebst einer Fugen | ex D# con Pedal. | eine Fantasie ex A. b. | Componirt von | Johann Sebastian Bach | Hochfürstl. Sächsischen Weißfeldischen | Capell Director | zu | Leipzig || Descripsi à Domino | W. H. Pachelbel Organ- | nista. SS. Sebaldi à Norimb., || Posseß S 1740 | den 20 Mai.* Heading on fol. 1v: *Praeludium et Fuga. | C# Allegro: | di Mons. Bach, Lipsiensis; fol. 2r, at end: Seqve l'Fuga un piu | Largo: | Volti.* Copyist: Lorenz Sichart, dated 1740. Prelude only (despite the title).

Additional sources: *Scholz 1* (Leipzig, Bach-Archiv, *Ms. Scholz 4.5.1*). Copyist: Leonhard Scholz, (1720–1798); *Scholz 2* (Leipzig, Bach-Archiv, *Ms. Scholz 4.5.2*). Copyist: L. Scholz, 2nd half 18th century; *Grasnick* (SBB, *Mus. ms. Bach P 913*). Copyist: Friedrich August Grasnick, (1798–1877); *Gleichauf* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, *Mendelssohn c.55*). Copyist: Franz Xaver Gleichauf, 1st half 19th century.

<sup>1</sup> Much of the information from these sources is summarized in the online *Göttinger Bach-Katalog* administered by the Bach-Archiv Leipzig, <http://www.bach.gwdg.de>.

## Examples

1. Praeludium in C, BWV 531, from Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Mus. ms. 40644 (Johann Christoph Bach)



2. Praeludium in C, BWV 566(a), from Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Mus. ms. Bach P 803/15 (Johann Tobias Krebs sr.)

A handwritten musical score for a Praeludium in C major, BWV 566(a), by Johann Tobias Krebs sr. The title is written in cursive at the top: "Praeludium in C major". The score consists of three staves of music. The first staff is the treble clef, the second is the alto clef, and the third is the bass clef. The music is written in a clear, early 18th-century hand. The paper shows signs of age and wear.



3. Prelude and Fugue in G, BWV 541, from Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, N. Mus. ms. 378 (autograph)



4. Prelude and Fugue in F minor, BWV 534, from the new Breitkopf edition

Praeludium et Fuga in f

BWV 534

A printed musical score for the Prelude and Fugue in F minor, BWV 534. The score is arranged in two systems. The first system shows the beginning of the piece, with a treble clef and a bass clef. The second system starts at measure 5. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and clefs, and is presented in a clean, modern layout.

5. Praeludium in A minor, BWV 551, from new Breitkopf edition

Praeludium in a

BWV 551

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the Praeludium in A minor, BWV 551. Each system consists of three staves: a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate bass staff. The first system shows the initial measures, with the right hand playing a series of sixteenth-note chords and the left hand providing a steady accompaniment. The second system continues the piece, showing more complex rhythmic patterns and a final cadence.

6. Toccata con fuga in D minor, BWV 565, from Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Mus. ms. Bach P 595/8 (Johannes Ringk)

This image shows a page of handwritten musical notation for the Toccata con fuga in D minor, BWV 565. The score is written on five staves. The top staff is marked 'Adagio' and features a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The second staff is marked 'Allegro' and features a bass clef. The third and fourth staves are marked 'allegro' and 'allegro' respectively. The fifth staff is marked 'allegro' and features a bass clef. The notation is dense and includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The manuscript is identified as 'Mus. ms. Bach P 595/8' and is attributed to Johannes Ringk.



7. Fugue in A, BWV 536/2, from Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Mus. ms. Bach P 804/30 (ca. 1726–7)



8. Fugue in A, BWV 536/2, from new Breitkopf edition

[Fuga] Allegro \*note or accidental emended

A printed musical score for the Fugue in A, BWV 536/2, from the new Breitkopf edition. The score is presented in two systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first system is labeled "[Fuga] Allegro" and includes a blue asterisk annotation "\*note or accidental emended". The second system starts at measure 15. The notation is clear and includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals. Blue asterisks are placed above specific notes in both systems to indicate emendations. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4.



9. Fugue in D, BWV 532a (532/2a), from new Breitkopf edition

Fuga in D

BWV 532/2a

Musical score for Fuga in D, BWV 532a (532/2a). The score is in D major and common time. It consists of two systems of four staves each. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a treble and bass clef. The second system starts at measure 5 and continues with complex polyphonic textures. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings.

10. Praeludium in E minor, BWV 533a, from new Breitkopf edition

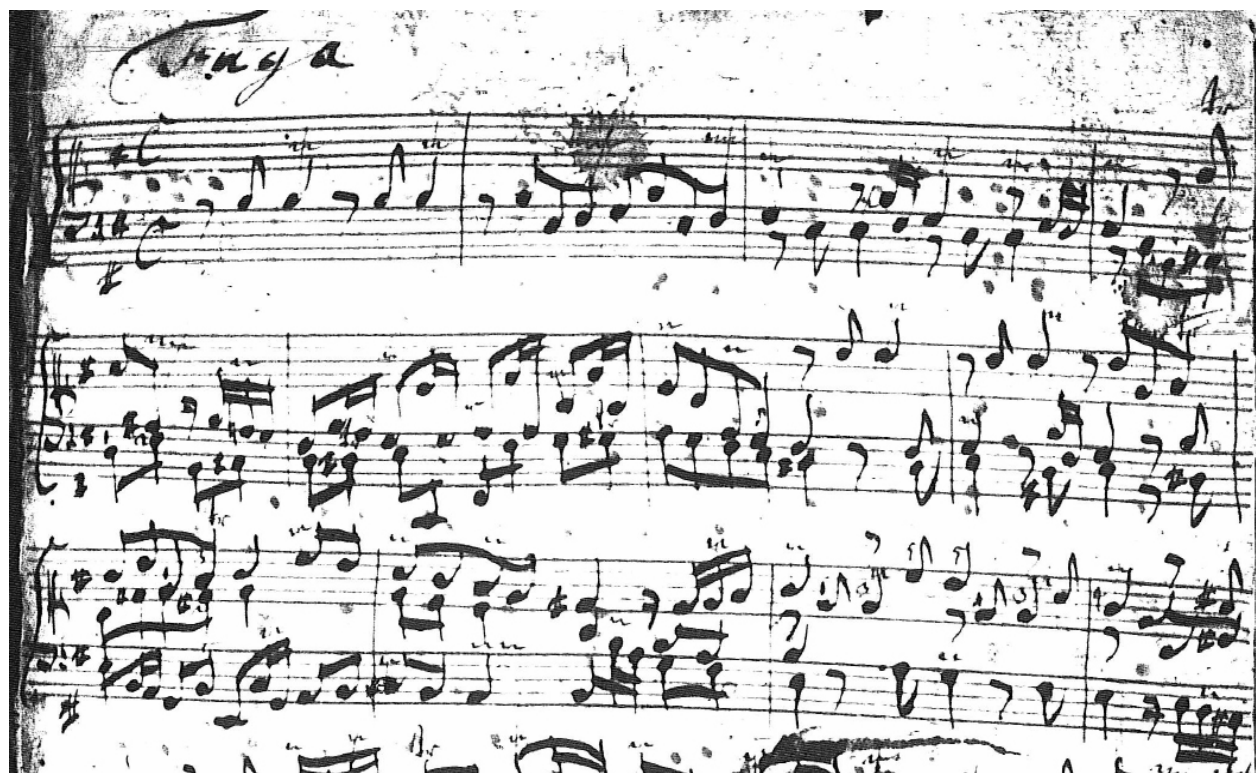
Anhang

Praeludium et Fuga in e

BWV 533 a

Musical score for Praeludium et Fuga in e, BWV 533a. The score is in E minor and common time. It consists of two systems of four staves each. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a treble and bass clef. The second system starts at measure 5 and continues with complex polyphonic textures. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings.

11. Fugue in E minor, BWV 533a/2, from Leipzig, Städtische Bibliotheken, Musikbibliothek, Ms. 7/19 (Johann Gottlieb Preller)



12. Fugue in E minor, BWV 533/2, from new Breitkopf edition

Fuga

A printed musical score for a fugue. It is titled "Fuga" and is in E minor (one sharp) and common time. The score is arranged in two systems. The first system has three staves: a single melodic line on a treble clef staff, and a two-part setting on two bass clef staves. The second system also has three staves: a single melodic line on a treble clef staff, and a two-part setting on two bass clef staves. The notation is clear and includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and bar lines. The number "6" is written at the beginning of the second system's top staff.

13. Praeludium in C minor, BWV 549, from *J. S. Bach: Werke*, vol. 38 (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1891)

**Praeludium.**

The image shows the beginning of the Praeludium in C minor, BWV 549. It is presented in three systems. The first system is labeled 'Manual.' and 'Pedal.' and shows the initial notes in both staves. The second system shows the continuation of the manual part. The third system shows the continuation of the manual part and the beginning of the pedal part, which features a characteristic rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

14. Prelude in C, BWV 545/2, mm. 24–end, as given in the lost “Clauss” manuscript (supposedly autograph)

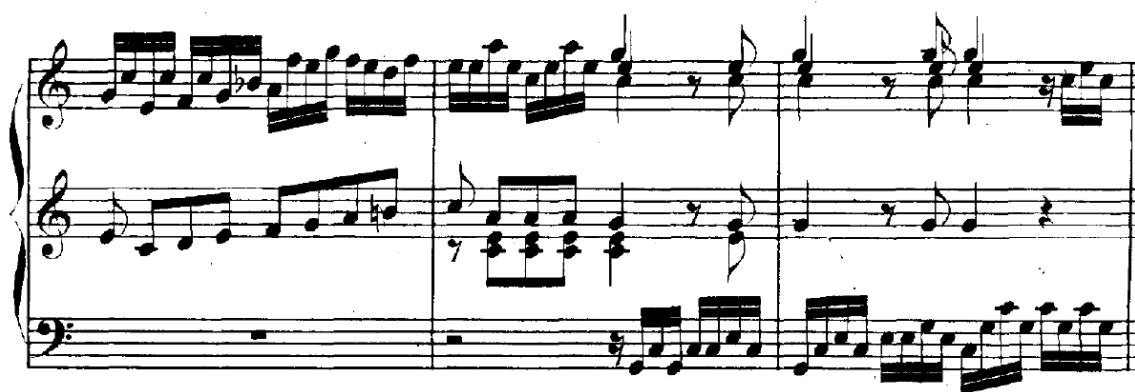
The image shows the ending of the Prelude in C, BWV 545/2, from measures 24 to the end. It is presented in three systems. The first system starts at measure 24 and shows the continuation of the piece. The second system starts at measure 27 and shows the continuation of the piece. The third system starts at measure 29 and shows the continuation of the piece, ending with a final cadence. The score is written for a single instrument, with a treble and bass clef.



15. Praeludium in C, BWV 531, mm. 12–14, from Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Mus. ms. 40644 (Johann Christoph Bach)



16. Praeludium in C, BWV 531, from *J. S. Bach: Werke*, vol. 15 (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1867)



17. Praeludium in C, BWV 531, from new Breitkopf edition



18. Fugue in D, BWV 532/2, from *J. S. Bach: Werke*, vol. 15 (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1867)



This image shows a printed musical score for the Fugue in D, BWV 532/2, from J. S. Bach's *Werke*, vol. 15. The score is arranged in two systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is D major (two sharps). The first system consists of four measures. The second system also consists of four measures. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and articulation marks.

19. Fugue in D, BWV 532/2, from Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Mus. ms. Bach P 595/4 (Johannes Ringk)



This image shows a handwritten musical score for the Fugue in D, BWV 532/2, from the Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Mus. ms. Bach P 595/4. The score is written on two staves (treble and bass clefs) and features dense, complex notation with many accidentals and slurs, characteristic of a working draft or a specific manuscript version.

20. Fugue in D, BWV 532/2, from new Breitkopf edition



This image shows a printed musical score for the Fugue in D, BWV 532/2, from the new Breitkopf edition. The score is arranged in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is D major (two sharps). The score begins at measure 110, as indicated by the number '110' in the top left corner. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and articulation marks.

21. Fugue in E minor, BWV 533/2, mm. 10–15, from Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Mus. ms. Bach P 287/5 (Johann Heinrich Michel)



22. Fugue in E minor, BWV 533/2, mm. 6–14, from new Breitkopf edition





23. Prelude and Fugue in G minor, BWV 535, from Leipzig, Bach-Archiv, MS Varia 1 (owned by Johann Christian Bach)

*Praeludium con Pedal.*

This image shows a handwritten musical score for the Prelude of BWV 535. The title is written in cursive as "Praeludium con Pedal." The score is written on three systems of staves. The first system consists of two staves, likely representing the right and left hands. The second system also consists of two staves. The third system consists of two staves, with the word "ped." written below the bottom staff, indicating the use of the sustain pedal. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings.

24. Prelude and Fugue in G minor, BWV 535, from *J. S. Bach: Werke*, vol. 15 (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1867)

**Praeludium.**

**Manuale.**

**Pedale.**

This image shows a printed musical score for the Prelude of BWV 535. The title is "Praeludium." The score is written on three systems of staves. The first system is labeled "Manuale." and "Pedale." and consists of two staves. The second system consists of two staves. The third system consists of two staves. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings.

25. Prelude and Fugue in G minor, BWV 535, from new Breitkopf edition

The first system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef, the middle in alto clef, and the bottom in bass clef. The key signature is G minor (two flats) and the time signature is common time (C). The music begins with a series of sixteenth-note patterns in the right hand, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment of eighth notes.

The second system of the musical score continues the piece from measure 5. It features more complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth-note runs and dotted rhythms, in both the right and left hands. The texture remains consistent with the first system, with the right hand carrying the melodic line and the left hand providing harmonic support.

The third system of the musical score starts at measure 10. The right hand continues with intricate sixteenth-note passages, while the left hand features a more active role with eighth-note patterns and some longer note values. The system concludes with a final cadence in the right hand.