

GRADE	II
AUTHOR	Johann Sebastian Bach
TITLE	Prelude in C Major BWV 939 (Or.: No title)
HISTORICAL NOTES	
<p>The prelude in question is found in a set of 57 handwritten folders that make up the collection of Johann Peter Kellner (1705-1722), a German composer and organist who, while he knew J.S. Bach, was never one of his students. In particular, the collection of preludes which also includes prelude BWV 939 is located in folder number 53, that was transcribed by an unknown copyist from an original manuscript by Bach and which came into Johann Peter Kellner's possession much later. Other critics have noted a different quality in the composing of these preludes than in other Bach compositions, thereby creating the assumption that they could have been composed by his son Wilhelm Friedemann Bach (1710-1784) or by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714-1788) with their father's assistance.</p> <p>Folder 53 contains 5 pieces of which BWV 939 is the third. While none of these pieces have a title but given that the folder also includes a copy of the Prelude in F Maj BWV 927 from the "Clavier-Büchlein vor Wilhelm Friedemann Bach", therefore, by analogy, all the pieces in the booklet were considered preludes.</p>	
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PIECE	
<p>BWV 939 is an easy two-voice prelude in imitative style, built on broken chords. It has an organ-like style, which can be noticed by the long initially-held eighth note. The melodic lines drawn by the broken chords never overlap, making the polyphonic "game" extremely clear and comprehensible. Just before the conclusion, a figured dominant bass prepares a brief cadenza of sixteenth notes that connects it to the end of the piece. In a very short space of time many composition elements are used allowing the prelude to convey a feeling of completeness in spite of its extraordinary brevity.</p>	
PERFORMANCE NOTES	
<p>In performing this piece I chose a moderate speed that emphasizes its organ-like style so as to allow a student in the second course to be able to comfortably perform the semiquavers in the final cadence.</p> <p>I have devoted particular attention to small mordents in the musical phrase that precedes the cadence, and so as to avoid them becoming an embellishment, a difficulty or a disturbance in the atmosphere and majestic calm of the prelude, I have played them more broadly, in semiquavers, on the first beat, as proposed in the tables of Jean-Henri d'Anglebert (1629-1691) that J.S. Bach put at the beginning of "Clavier-Büchlein vor Wilhelm Friedemann Bach".</p>	

Tullio Forlenza