

PROFILE

<b>GRADE</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>AUTHOR:</b>  Johann Sebastian Bach	
<b>TITLE:</b>  Prelude in D Minor BWV 940  (Or.: No title)	
<b>HISTORICAL NOTES</b>	
<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 940 is the first. None of these pieces have a title, but given that the folder also includes a copy of the Prelude in F Major BWV 927 from the "Clavier-Büchlein vor Wilhelm Friedemann Bach", therefore, by analogy, all the pieces in the booklet were considered preludes.</p>	
<b>CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PIECE</b>	
<p>This is an intimate and meditative piece that begins in three parts continuing in four parts from the fifth bar onwards. The main thematic element is featured four times in its entirety, after which only the first element continues to be used, being merged with other, freer elements, not directly derived from the initial motif. In spite of its brevity, which also characterises the previous prelude BWV 939, this piece contains all of the typical problems of fingering found in more complex polyphonic music.</p> <p>On reading the manuscript some doubts and ambiguities arise. For example, the first embellishment in the first bar is partially deleted, and also occurs in the second embellishment of the third bar. The mordant in the fifth bar, on the second note of the right hand, could also simply be a minor correction rendering it more interesting. In the manuscript, the F-sharp in the final chord isn't written, so the major chord that usually ends a small piece (which from 1767 will be nominated the "Picardy cadence") is clearly only the result of performance habits.</p>	
<b>PERFORMANCE NOTES</b>	
<p>Without giving it a second thought, I chose a moderate tempo, so as to highlight all of the expressive qualities of this little piece. The style is eloquent, but is always phrased with great care to encourage the performer not to speed up or slow down too much, because from a stylistic point of view, this would be too disruptive. I sought to produce a cantabile sound, searching for a timbre that would evoke an inner expressiveness.</p>	