

PROFILE

GRADE	II
AUTHOR:	Johann Sebastian Bach
TITLE:	Prelude in A Minor BWV 942 (Or.: No title)
HISTORICAL NOTES	
<p>The prelude in question can be found amongst 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 942 is in folder number 53 and was transcribed by an unknown copyist from an original manuscript by Bach and came into Johann Peter Kellner's possession much later.</p> <p>Some critics have noted a difference in the quality of the composing of these preludes compared to others by Bach, thereby creating the assumption that they may 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 942 is the fifth and none of these pieces have titles. However, the folder also includes a copy of the Prelude in F Major BWV 927 from the "Clavier-Büchlein vor Wilhelm Friedemann Bach" which comes just before BWV 942. Therefore, by analogy, all of the pieces in the booklet were considered preludes.</p>	
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PIECE	
<p>Like the other pieces in the folder, this is also a short piece, consisting of only 17 bars in 9/8 tempo with triple ternary subdivisions, therefore in 3. The initial idea extends for two bars then moves to the lower voice where it is repeated in the dominant key. The motif appears twice more before the conclusion, first in the upper voice then in the lower one respectively. Various appearances of the theme alternate with some chromatic moments and brief cadences of semiquavers. Finally, with a cadence it concludes in the tonic key. With regard to its formal characteristics and the rigorous writing in two parts, this short prelude is similar to a small two-part invention.</p>	
PERFORMANCE NOTES	
<p>Because of its Gigue-like character, since 9/8 time is often used for this particular type of dance, this small piece is often performed with a fast tempo. In addition, to enhance this dance-like effect performers alternate detached and legato sounds in different ways. To my mind the expressiveness of this little prelude is heightened when it is played calmly and meditatively so that the complex chromatic counterpoints and the interesting overlap of sounds that are created are emphasized. Even the passages of semiquavers, if played at a more moderate speed, are better integrated and more logical, giving a temporary resolution to its harmonic and melodic complexity.</p>	
CURIOSITY	
<p>In bar n. 9 of the piece, there is a glaring error in the original manuscript, a sequence of three parallel fifths between the two voices. In order to obviate this error, the printed editions propose different solutions. Personally I proceeded to record two versions of the prelude with the two most frequently adopted solutions</p>	