

PROFILE

GRADE	III
AUTHOR:	Johann Sebastian Bach
TITLE:	Prelude in C Major BWV 943 (Or.: Praeludium)
HISTORICAL NOTES	
<p>The prelude in question can be found among 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 prelude BWV 943 is located in file 2, and was transcribed by Johann Nikolaus Mey (? -?), a friend of Johann Peter Kellner's. That this was transcribed by Mey is easily deducible by observing his calligraphy.</p> <p>This prelude can clearly be attributed to Johann Sebastian Bach, given that Johann Nikolaus Mey over time, realized several handwritten copies of concertos adapted by J.S. Bach for the harpsichord or organ. These had initially been transcribed by J.S. Bach from concertos for various instruments by other, often Italian, authors. Mey writes on the copy in his own hand: "<i>Praeludium in C di Johann Sebastian Bach</i>" [Prelude in C by Johann Sebastian Bach] which, given his expertise, is undoubtedly genuine. Prelude BWV 943 is the only existing piece in file 2 and also appears to be an early work, probably composed during his stay in Arnstadt.</p>	
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PIECE	
<p>This prelude is longer than the previous ones in the same series, as well as being more complex due to the fact it is written in three parts with a short addition of a fourth in the final coda. The tempo is ternary and the initial thematic element is based on a continuous pattern of binary subdivisions. Its subsequent elaboration is structured on the imitation of the initial thematic element which, over the course of the prelude, undergoes several transformations. The presence of sustained long sounds and harmonic overlaps leads us to believe that the piece was originally intended for the organ, the instrument on which it is still frequently performed. Formally it can be divided into two large parts, the first ending at bar 28 with a cadence on the dominant tone, and the second part that starts from bar 29 with the exposition of the inverted theme, and ends with final imitations on a long tonic pedal.</p>	
PERFORMANCE NOTES	
<p>I chose a more legato and a slightly austere sound in order to retain the initial idea of it being a piece for the organ. Particular attention was paid to the clarity of the imitative play and regularity in its performance so as to facilitate its reading and the expressive choral quality which is peculiar to Bach's music. Often in the piece some difficulties with fingering are encountered but can be solved if familiar with simple and double substitution techniques, so typical of organ writing. This was the reason why I decided to insert this among the pieces comprising the third course.</p>	

Tullio Forlenza