

Produced by Paul Myers

Other times, less positively-minded than ours, have left us a multitude of problems posed by their musical compositions. "Deviant" music was at one time an actively traded commodity, composed not for future generations, but for a specific occasion, or to fill a definite and continuing function—like a royal farrier. It is a moot point whether Bach knew his own composing as an ongoing masterpiece each time he picked up his pen. It is a certainty, though, that he knew precisely why he was composing that piece at that time, and not any other.

A composer's manuscript, then, was generally not looked upon as a finished piece, but as a working draft, a sketch, or a model. If the work was published, the composer obviously had no future function for it; it was not to be looked at, at any rate, been given the performance for which it had been written in the first place. A composer might keep a back file of material for reworking, or he might use it as a source of ideas. He might give a manuscript to a friend as a kind of gift, or he might include some high-flown dedication upon it and send it to a wealthy nobleman in the hope of future favor, or outright cash. Or he might just as easily use it for wrapping the lunch when he finally planned to spend a day in the country. One hesitates to guess the number of cartons that passed on an appreciable collection as shrouds for a smudged fish.

If earlier composers showed little respect for their manuscripts, musicologists today more than make up for this difference. Regardless of the existence of published editions, a composer's autograph manuscript is now considered the most important single piece of information we can possess regarding a composition—despite the fact that its discovery is likely to raise as many problems as it solves. In the case of Bach's *Inventions* and *Sinfonias* (frequently called the *Two- and Three-Part Inventions*), we are, to speak, "blown away" for the composer has left us three separate autographs of the music, each of which calls a somewhat different light upon it.

The earliest of these is to be found in the *Clavierbüchlein* (Little Clavier Book) for Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, a collection of pieces gradually assembled for the musical education of Bach's eldest son, aged 10 at the time the book was begun. The *Clavierbüchlein* opens with an explanation of the various keys and key signatures, and the correct interpretation of the musical notation. It is a series of pieces of varying increasing difficulty, each composed (or adapted) as usual, and the character of each very probably influenced by Wilhelm Friedemann's immediate digital problems. The *Inventions* and *Sinfonias* are found toward the end of the book, but under different titles. The pieces are called the *Inventionen* and *Sinfonien* in the original manuscript. The *Two- and Three-Part Inventions* are grouped separately, but in similar order of keys: first according to C Major, D Minor, E Minor, etc. to B Minor, then descending (G-F# Major, A Major, G Minor, etc.). Philipp Spitta, a great authority on Bach's works, has pointed out that the D Major *Sinfonia* is there only in part, and the C Major *Sinfonia* not at all, although both appear in other manuscripts.

Were this the only surviving manuscript of the *Inventions* and *Sinfonias*, one might logically conclude that Bach's purpose in writing them was purely pedagogical. They explore a wealth of technical problems (though not as systematically as some studies of a later generation), and they give the player practice in a number of major and minor keys. The complexities of managing three individual voices are skillfully served until the player has mastered the handling of two. But there are few better indications of Bach's mature compositional style and talent than the somewhat different illustration of the other manuscripts.

The second autograph is dated 1723, and for a variety of reasons is usually considered to be Bach's final word on the details of the music. The two- and three-part works are again grouped separately and in parallel, this time, however, entirely in ascending order of key. Bach prefaced the music with the following title:

*Eye-light instruction, whereunto learners of the clavier, especially those desirous of learning, are shown in a clear way*

## A WORD ABOUT THE PIANO

The instrument represented on this disc is a pre-World War II Steinway which answers to CD 318, and to which I feel a greater devotion than to any other piano that I have been entrusted. For the past few years it has been reserved exclusively for our sessions at Columbia Records—not as great a sacrifice on the part of the makers as you might imagine, since no one else has ever expressed the slightest interest in it. It has enabled me to carry out some rather radical experiments in regard to the action of this piano, in effect, to try to design an instrument for baroque repertoire which can add to the undeniable resource of the modern piano something of the clarity and tactile facility of the early instrument.

For those sessions in which more recent or more conventionally pianistic repertoire has been our concern, we have not made any special demand upon this instrument, but given to each of the Bach sessions of the past few years, CD 318 has undergone major surgery. The alignment of each essential mechanical matters as the distance of the hammer from the strings, the "letting-off" mechanism, etc. has been earnestly reconsidered in accordance with my sober conviction that no piano need feel duty-bound to always sound like a piano. Old 318, if released from its natural tendency in that direction, could probably be prevailed upon to give us a sound of such immediacy and clarity that those qualities of non-legato so essential to Bach would be gloriously realized.

In my opinion, the present disc brings us within reach of this objective. The operation performed just before the sessions which produced the *Inventions* was so successful that we played joyfully into the recording without allowing old 318 its usual post-operative recuperation. Consequently, our enthusiasm for the rather extraordinary sound it now produced allowed us to minimize the one minor after-effect which it had sustained—a slight nervous tic in the middle register which in slower passages can be heard emitting a sort of hiccup—and to carry on with the sessions without stopping to remedy this minor defect. I must confess that having grown somewhat accustomed to it I now find this charming idiosyncrasy entirely worthy of the remarkable instrument which produced it. I might even recommend the matter by comparing it with the clavierist's propensity for an intra-tempo vibrato. However, in our best of all worlds we would hope to preserve the present sound while reducing the hiccup effect so, as the television card says on those occasions when sound and video portions go their separate ways—"STAY TUNED IN—WE'RE FIXING IT."

Glenn Gould

Stereo—MS 6622

Mono—ML 6032



# Bach: The Two and Three Part Inventions (Inventions & Sinfonias) Glenn Gould



Mono—ML 6032



not only 1) to learn to play two voices clearly, but also after further progress 2) to find correctly their mutual compensation parts, moreover at the same time to obtain not only good ideas, but also to carry them out well. But most of all to achieve a certain right of playing, and thereby to acquire a strong foretaste of composition. Prepared by Joh. Seb. Bach, Compositor to his Son-in-Law, the Prince of Anhalt-Cöthen. Anno Christi 1723.

The intent is again natural, but Bach shows us now that he has a great deal more in mind than the simple development of finger dexterity. For these are lessons in taste as well as in technique, and they are models for beginners in composition. But there is yet a third manuscript, dating also from 1723, and differing from the others in one very important respect: each two-part invention is followed immediately with the corresponding three-part sinfonia, thus forming a series of two-movement units not unlike the preludes and fugues of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*. According to Spitta, "It cannot be doubted that the composer conceived each pair as the same time." There is, as he goes on to say, a correspondence of theme in several of the pairs, and a correspondence of mood in many others. Certainly, such conjunction of invention and sinfonia is strikingly effective in performance. Hence the pedagogical intent has been pushed far into the background. Freed of the necessity to match their difficulties to a player's abilities, the *Inventions* and *Sinfonias* stand on their own feet as pure music.

What is an invention? Bach, as we have seen, was not quite sure himself. Prior to 1723, the term had been used by the Italian composer Vivaldi as a title for pieces involving special tricks, and by Antonio Bonporti as a synonym for "suite." (Four of the latter's inventions were mistakenly reprinted in the Bach Gesellschaft's collected edition.) Obviously, neither of those usages paralleled Bach's, and his reasons for using the title remain a mystery. The term "sinfonia" (though of far more common musical usage, is equally non-specific here. Originally, a sinfonia was almost any kind of an instrumental piece that was not a dance. By the end of the 17th century it had developed a rather specific form which, however, is not the form of these sinfonias by Bach.

Such confusions of terminology are not past understanding when we examine the music itself, for, in fact, there had been nothing quite like these pieces before. They contain both fugal and canonic writing, but they are neither fugues nor canons. Adopting the broad definition that the *Inventions* are studies in two-part counterpoint, one can trace for them a long lineage, beginning perhaps with the ancient form of the *licetium*, a dance for two instruments or voices, but there is a harmonic direction in these pieces by Bach which is totally absent in earlier works, and is one of the staples of the Two-Part *Inventions*, even more so than the *Sinfonias*, that such a complex harmonic movement is established and maintained with such an economy of notes. And the incisive, tense and other early forms were musically rather short of breath, and needed an infusion of new thematic material at frequent intervals.

A critic (Hermann Kretschmer), in commenting on the predominance of German music, put his finger on the Two- and Three-Part *Inventions* as the source of the very principles which established that predominance. "These principles might be termed as the way a small melodic motif is stated and varied, the way the harmonic language is developed, and the way the melodic and harmonic implications are completely fulfilled and exhausted in the course of the composition; the way this single thin thread of musical material is used as the sole generator of a work. So much is the secret, the achievement, and the 'invention' of the *Inventions*. With the benefit of historical hindsight, we know what it led to.

JAMES GOSWORTHY

Some other recordings by Glenn Gould you may enjoy:

Bach: The Goldberg Variations—ML 3060  
The Art of the Fugue—ML 3101  
The Well-Tempered Clavier (Book 1)—MS 5806/MS 6484  
The Six Partitas—ML 385/MS 6434

SIDE 1		SIDE 2	
BACH: INVENTIONS AND SINFONIAS		BACH: INVENTIONS AND SINFONIAS	
No. 1 in C Major	2:10	No. 6 in C Major	3:30
No. 2 in C Major	2:10	No. 7 in C Major	3:30
No. 3 in C Major	2:10	No. 8 in C Major	3:30
No. 4 in B-flat Major	2:10	No. 9 in B-flat Major	3:30
No. 5 in D Minor	2:10	No. 10 in D Minor	3:30
No. 11 in E Minor	2:10	No. 12 in E Minor	3:30
No. 13 in E Minor	2:10	No. 14 in E Minor	3:30
No. 15 in E Minor	2:10	No. 16 in E Minor	3:30
No. 17 in E Minor	2:10	No. 18 in E Minor	3:30
No. 19 in E Minor	2:10	No. 20 in E Minor	3:30
No. 21 in E Minor	2:10	No. 22 in E Minor	3:30
No. 23 in E Minor	2:10	No. 24 in E Minor	3:30
No. 25 in E Minor	2:10	No. 26 in E Minor	3:30
No. 27 in E Minor	2:10	No. 28 in E Minor	3:30
No. 29 in E Minor	2:10	No. 30 in E Minor	3:30
No. 31 in E Minor	2:10	No. 32 in E Minor	3:30
No. 33 in E Minor	2:10	No. 34 in E Minor	3:30
No. 35 in E Minor	2:10	No. 36 in E Minor	3:30
No. 37 in E Minor	2:10	No. 38 in E Minor	3:30
No. 39 in E Minor	2:10	No. 40 in E Minor	3:30
No. 41 in E Minor	2:10	No. 42 in E Minor	3:30
No. 43 in E Minor	2:10	No. 44 in E Minor	3:30
No. 45 in E Minor	2:10	No. 46 in E Minor	3:30
No. 47 in E Minor	2:10	No. 48 in E Minor	3:30
No. 49 in E Minor	2:10	No. 50 in E Minor	3:30
No. 51 in E Minor	2:10	No. 52 in E Minor	3:30
No. 53 in E Minor	2:10	No. 54 in E Minor	3:30
No. 55 in E Minor	2:10	No. 56 in E Minor	3:30
No. 57 in E Minor	2:10	No. 58 in E Minor	3:30
No. 59 in E Minor	2:10	No. 60 in E Minor	3:30
No. 61 in E Minor	2:10	No. 62 in E Minor	3:30
No. 63 in E Minor	2:10	No. 64 in E Minor	3:30
No. 65 in E Minor	2:10	No. 66 in E Minor	3:30
No. 67 in E Minor	2:10	No. 68 in E Minor	3:30
No. 69 in E Minor	2:10	No. 70 in E Minor	3:30
No. 71 in E Minor	2:10	No. 72 in E Minor	3:30
No. 73 in E Minor	2:10	No. 74 in E Minor	3:30
No. 75 in E Minor	2:10	No. 76 in E Minor	3:30
No. 77 in E Minor	2:10	No. 78 in E Minor	3:30
No. 79 in E Minor	2:10	No. 80 in E Minor	3:30
No. 81 in E Minor	2:10	No. 82 in E Minor	3:30
No. 83 in E Minor	2:10	No. 84 in E Minor	3:30
No. 85 in E Minor	2:10	No. 86 in E Minor	3:30
No. 87 in E Minor	2:10	No. 88 in E Minor	3:30
No. 89 in E Minor	2:10	No. 90 in E Minor	3:30
No. 91 in E Minor	2:10	No. 92 in E Minor	3:30
No. 93 in E Minor	2:10	No. 94 in E Minor	3:30
No. 95 in E Minor	2:10	No. 96 in E Minor	3:30
No. 97 in E Minor	2:10	No. 98 in E Minor	3:30
No. 99 in E Minor	2:10	No. 100 in E Minor	3:30
No. 101 in E Minor	2:10	No. 102 in E Minor	3:30
No. 103 in E Minor	2:10	No. 104 in E Minor	3:30
No. 105 in E Minor	2:10	No. 106 in E Minor	3:30
No. 107 in E Minor	2:10	No. 108 in E Minor	3:30
No. 109 in E Minor	2:10	No. 110 in E Minor	3:30
No. 111 in E Minor	2:10	No. 112 in E Minor	3:30
No. 113 in E Minor	2:10	No. 114 in E Minor	3:30
No. 115 in E Minor	2:10	No. 116 in E Minor	3:30
No. 117 in E Minor	2:10	No. 118 in E Minor	3:30
No. 119 in E Minor	2:10	No. 120 in E Minor	3:30
No. 121 in E Minor	2:10	No. 122 in E Minor	3:30
No. 123 in E Minor	2:10	No. 124 in E Minor	3:30
No. 125 in E Minor	2:10	No. 126 in E Minor	3:30
No. 127 in E Minor	2:10	No. 128 in E Minor	3:30
No. 129 in E Minor	2:10	No. 130 in E Minor	3:30
No. 131 in E Minor	2:10	No. 132 in E Minor	3:30
No. 133 in E Minor	2:10	No. 134 in E Minor	3:30
No. 135 in E Minor	2:10	No. 136 in E Minor	3:30
No. 137 in E Minor	2:10	No. 138 in E Minor	3:30
No. 139 in E Minor	2:10	No. 140 in E Minor	3:30
No. 141 in E Minor	2:10	No. 142 in E Minor	3:30
No. 143 in E Minor	2:10	No. 144 in E Minor	3:30
No. 145 in E Minor	2:10	No. 146 in E Minor	3:30
No. 147 in E Minor	2:10	No. 148 in E Minor	3:30
No. 149 in E Minor	2:10	No. 150 in E Minor	3:30
No. 151 in E Minor	2:10	No. 152 in E Minor	3:30
No. 153 in E Minor	2:10	No. 154 in E Minor	3:30
No. 155 in E Minor	2:10	No. 156 in E Minor	3:30
No. 157 in E Minor	2:10	No. 158 in E Minor	3:30
No. 159 in E Minor	2:10	No. 160 in E Minor	3:30
No. 161 in E Minor	2:10	No. 162 in E Minor	3:30
No. 163 in E Minor	2:10	No. 164 in E Minor	3:30
No. 165 in E Minor	2:10	No. 166 in E Minor	3:30
No. 167 in E Minor	2:10	No. 168 in E Minor	3:30
No. 169 in E Minor	2:10	No. 170 in E Minor	3:30
No. 171 in E Minor	2:10	No. 172 in E Minor	3:30
No. 173 in E Minor	2:10	No. 174 in E Minor	3:30
No. 175 in E Minor	2:10	No. 176 in E Minor	3:30
No. 177 in E Minor	2:10	No. 178 in E Minor	3:30
No. 179 in E Minor	2:10	No. 180 in E Minor	3:30
No. 181 in E Minor	2:10	No. 182 in E Minor	3:30
No. 183 in E Minor	2:10	No. 184 in E Minor	3:30
No. 185 in E Minor	2:10	No. 186 in E Minor	3:30
No. 187 in E Minor	2:10	No. 188 in E Minor	3:30
No. 189 in E Minor	2:10	No. 190 in E Minor	3:30
No. 191 in E Minor	2:10	No. 192 in E Minor	3:30
No. 193 in E Minor	2:10	No. 194 in E Minor	3:30
No. 195 in E Minor	2:10	No. 196 in E Minor	3:30
No. 197 in E Minor	2:10	No. 198 in E Minor	3:30
No. 199 in E Minor	2:10	No. 200 in E Minor	3:30
No. 201 in E Minor	2:10	No. 202 in E Minor	3:30
No. 203 in E Minor	2:10	No. 204 in E Minor	3:30
No. 205 in E Minor	2:10	No. 206 in E Minor	3:30
No. 207 in E Minor	2:10	No. 208 in E Minor	3:30
No. 209 in E Minor	2:10	No. 210 in E Minor	3:30
No. 211 in E Minor	2:10	No. 212 in E Minor	3:30
No. 213 in E Minor	2:10	No. 214 in E Minor	3:30
No. 215 in E Minor	2:10	No. 216 in E Minor	3:30
No. 217 in E Minor	2:10	No. 218 in E Minor	3:30
No. 219 in E Minor	2:10	No. 220 in E Minor	3:30
No. 221 in E Minor	2:10	No. 222 in E Minor	3:30
No. 223 in E Minor	2:10	No. 224 in E Minor	3:30
No. 225 in E Minor	2:10	No. 226 in E Minor	3:30
No. 227 in E Minor	2:10	No. 228 in E Minor	3:30
No. 229 in E Minor	2:10	No. 230 in E Minor	3:30
No. 231 in E Minor	2:10	No. 232 in E Minor	3:30
No. 233 in E Minor	2:10	No. 234 in E Minor	3:30
No. 235 in E Minor	2:10	No. 236 in E Minor	3:30
No. 237 in E Minor	2:10	No. 238 in E Minor	3:30
No. 239 in E Minor	2:10	No. 240 in E Minor	3:30
No. 241 in E Minor	2:10	No. 242 in E Minor	3:30
No. 243 in E Minor	2:10	No. 244 in E Minor	3:30
No. 245 in E Minor	2:10	No. 246 in E Minor	3:30
No. 247 in E Minor	2:10	No. 248 in E Minor	3:30
No. 249 in E Minor	2:10	No. 250 in E Minor	3:30
No. 251 in E Minor	2:10	No. 252 in E Minor	3:30
No. 253 in E Minor	2:10	No. 254 in E Minor	3:30
No. 255 in E Minor	2:10	No. 256 in E Minor	3:30
No. 257 in E Minor	2:10	No. 258 in E Minor	3:30
No. 259 in E Minor	2:10	No. 260 in E Minor	3:30
No. 261 in E Minor	2:10	No. 262 in E Minor	3:30
No. 263 in E Minor	2:10	No. 264 in E Minor	3:30
No. 265 in E Minor	2:10	No. 266 in E Minor	3:30
No. 267 in E Minor	2:10	No. 268 in E Minor	3:30
No. 269 in E Minor	2:10	No. 270 in E Minor	3:30
No. 271 in E Minor	2:10	No. 272 in E Minor	3:30
No. 273 in E Minor	2:10	No. 274 in E Minor	3:30
No. 275 in E Minor	2:10	No. 276 in E Minor	3:30
No. 277 in E Minor	2:10	No. 278 in E Minor	3:30
No. 279 in E Minor	2:10	No. 280 in E Minor	3:30
No. 281 in E Minor	2:10	No. 282 in E Minor	3:30
No. 283 in E Minor	2:10	No. 284 in E Minor	3:30
No. 285 in E Minor	2:10	No. 286 in E Minor	3:30
No. 287 in E Minor	2:10	No. 288 in E Minor	3:30
No. 289 in E Minor	2:10	No. 290 in E Minor	3:30
No. 291 in E Minor	2:10	No. 292 in E Minor	3:30
No. 293 in E Minor	2:10	No. 294 in E Minor	3:30
No. 295 in E Minor	2:10	No. 296 in E Minor	3:30
No. 297 in E Minor	2:10	No. 298 in E Minor	3:30
No. 299 in E Minor	2:10	No. 300 in E Minor	3:30
No. 301 in E Minor	2:10	No. 302 in E Minor	3:30
No. 303 in E Minor	2:10	No. 304 in E Minor	3:30
No. 305 in E Minor	2:10	No. 306 in E Minor	3:30
No. 307 in E Minor	2:10	No. 308 in E Minor	3:30
No. 309 in E Minor	2:10	No. 310 in E Minor	3:30
No. 311 in E Minor	2:10	No. 312 in E Minor	3:30
No. 313 in E Minor	2:10	No. 314 in E Minor	3:30
No. 315 in E Minor	2:10	No. 316 in E Minor	3:30
No. 317 in E Minor	2:10	No. 318 in E Minor	3:30
No. 319 in E Minor	2:10	No. 320 in E Minor	3:30
No. 321 in E Minor	2:10	No. 322 in E Minor	3:30
No. 323 in E Minor	2:10	No. 324 in E Minor	3:30
No. 325 in E Minor	2:10	No. 326 in E Minor	3:30
No. 327 in E Minor	2:10	No. 328 in E Minor	3:30
No. 329 in E Minor	2:10	No. 330 in E Minor	3:30
No. 331 in E Minor	2:10	No. 332 in E Minor	3:30
No. 333 in E Minor	2:10	No. 334 in E Minor	3:30
No. 335 in E Minor	2:10	No. 336 in E Minor	3:30
No. 337 in E Minor	2:10	No. 338 in E Minor	3:30
No. 339 in E Minor	2:10	No. 340 in E Minor	3:30
No. 341 in E Minor	2:10	No. 342 in E Minor	3:30
No. 343 in E Minor	2:10	No. 344 in E Minor	3:30
No. 345 in E Minor	2:10	No. 346 in E Minor	3:30
No. 347 in E Minor	2:10	No. 348 in E Minor	3:30
No. 349 in E Minor	2:10	No. 350 in E Minor	3:30

# Johann Sebastian Bach 1685–1750

## 2-Part Inventions and 3-Part Sinfonias

### BWV 772–801

Zweistimmige Inventionen und dreistimmige Sinfonien

Inventions à deux parties et Sinfonias à trois parties

[1] <b>Inventio 1 in C major</b> BWV 772	1:32
[2] <b>Sinfonia 1 in C major</b> BWV 787 C-Dur · en <i>ut</i> majeur	0:46
[3] <b>Inventio 2 in C minor</b> BWV 773	2:54
[4] <b>Sinfonia 2 in C minor</b> BWV 788 c-Moll · en <i>ut</i> mineur	3:03
[5] <b>Inventio 5 in E-flat major</b> BWV 776	1:21
[6] <b>Sinfonia 5 in E-flat major</b> BWV 791 Es-Dur · en <i>mi</i> bémol majeur	3:08
[7] <b>Inventio 14 in B-flat major</b> BWV 785	1:37
[8] <b>Sinfonia 14 in B-flat major</b> BWV 800 B-Dur · en <i>si</i> bémol majeur	1:09

[9] <b>Inventio 11 in G minor</b> BWV 782	0:55
[10] <b>Sinfonia 11 in G minor</b> BWV 797 g-Moll · en <i>sol</i> mineur	3:45
[11] <b>Inventio 10 in G major</b> BWV 781	0:40
[12] <b>Sinfonia 10 in G major</b> BWV 796 G-Dur · en <i>sol</i> majeur	0:58
[13] <b>Inventio 15 in B minor</b> BWV 786	0:52
[14] <b>Sinfonia 15 in B minor</b> BWV 801 h-Moll · en <i>si</i> mineur	1:04
[15] <b>Inventio 7 in E minor</b> BWV 778	0:54
[16] <b>Sinfonia 7 in E minor</b> BWV 793 e-Moll · en <i>mi</i> mineur	1:33
[17] <b>Inventio 6 in E major</b> BWV 777	2:42
[18] <b>Sinfonia 6 in E major</b> BWV 792 E-Dur · en <i>mi</i> majeur	0:52
[19] <b>Inventio 13 in A minor</b> BWV 784	0:45

[20]	<b>Sinfonia 13 in A minor</b> BWV 799 a-Moll · en <i>la</i> mineur	2:15
[21]	<b>Inventio 12 in A major</b> BWV 783	0:56
[22]	<b>Sinfonia 12 in A major</b> BWV 798 A-Dur · en <i>la</i> majeur	1:16
[23]	<b>Inventio 3 in D major</b> BWV 774	1:00
[24]	<b>Sinfonia 3 in D major</b> BWV 789 D-Dur · en <i>ré</i> majeur	1:08
[25]	<b>Inventio 4 in D minor</b> BWV 775	0:45
[26]	<b>Sinfonia 4 in D minor</b> BWV 790 d-Moll · en <i>ré</i> mineur	3:15
[27]	<b>Inventio 8 in F major</b> BWV 779	1:03
[28]	<b>Sinfonia 8 in F major</b> BWV 794 F-Dur · en <i>fa</i> majeur	0:59
[29]	<b>Inventio 9 in F minor</b> BWV 780	2:48

[30]	<b>Sinfonia 9 in F minor</b> BWV 795 f-Moll · en <i>fa</i> mineur	4:17
------	---	------

Total Time 50:11

**Glenn Gould** piano

**Original LP: MS 6622 / ML 6022** · Released August 10, 1964  
Recording: Columbia 30th Street Studio, New York City, December 6/11/19, 1963,  
January 2 and March 18/19, 1964 · Producer: Paul Myers  
Cover Photo: Don Hunstein · Liner Notes: James Goodfriend & Glenn Gould  
LP Matrix: XSM 77394 [1-16], XSM 77395 [17-30] (stereo);  
xLP 77392 [1-16], xLP 77393 [17-30] (mono)  
© 1964 & © 2015 Sony Music Entertainment. All rights reserved.

Other times, less posterity-minded than ours, have left us a multitude of problems concerning their musical compositions. “Serious” music was at one time an actively traded commodity, composed not for future generations, but for a specific occasion, or to fill a definite and continuing function – like a royal fanfare. It is a moot point whether Bach knew he was composing an undying masterpiece each time he picked up his pen. It is certainty, though, that he knew precisely why he was composing *that* piece at *that* time, and not any other.

A composer’s manuscript, then, was generally not looked upon as a priceless possession – least of all by the composer himself. If the work was published, the manuscript obviously had no future function. If it was not published, it had, at any rate, been given the performance for which it had been written – in the first place. A composer might keep a back file of material for reworking to fill new commissions at short notice. He might give a manuscript to a friend as a kind of memento. He might inscribe some high-flown dedication upon it and send it to a wealthy nobleman in the hope of future favors, or outright cash. Or he might just as easily use it for wrapping the lunch when the family planned to spend a day in the country. One hesitates to guess the number of cantatas that passed to an ignoble extinction as shrouds for smoked fish.

If earlier composers showed but little respect *for* their manuscripts, musicologists today more than make up the difference. Regardless of the existence of published editions, a composer’s autograph manuscript is now considered the most important single piece of information we can possess regarding a composition – despite the fact that its discovery is likely to raise as many problems as it solves. In the case of Bach’s *Inventions and Sinfonias* (frequently called the *Two- and Three-Part Inventions*) we are, so to speak, “thrice blessed,” for the composer has

left us three separate autographs of the music, each of which casts a somewhat different light upon it.

The earliest of these is to be found in the *Clavierbüchlein (Little Clavier Book) für Wilhelm Friedmann Bach*, a collection of pieces gradually assembled for the musical education of Bach’s eldest son, aged 10 at the time the book was begun. The *Clavierbüchlein* opens with an explication of the various keys and key signatures, and the correct interpretation of the signs for musical ornaments. It follows with pieces of gradually increasing difficulty, each composed (or adapted) as needed, and the character of each very probably influenced by Wilhelm Friedemann’s immediate digital problems. The *Inventions and Sinfonias* are found toward the end of the book, but under different names, each two-part piece being titled *Praeambulum*, and each three-part, *Fantasia*. The two- and three-part pieces are grouped separately, but in similar order of keys: first ascending (C major, D minor, E minor, etc.) to B minor, then descending (B-flat major, A major, G minor, etc.). Philipp Spitta, the greatest of Bach biographers, has pointed out that the D major *Sinfonia* is there only in part, and the C minor *Sinfonia* not at all, although both appear in other manuscripts.

Were this the only surviving manuscript of the *Inventions and Sinfonias*, one might logically conclude that Bach’s purpose in writing them was purely pedagogical. They explore a wealth of technical problems (though not as systematically as some études of a later generation), and they give the player practice in a number of major and minor keys. The complexities of managing three individual voices rightfully reserved until the player has mastered the handling of two. But there are few better indications of Bach’s multi-faceted compositional style and intent than the somewhat different illumination of the other manuscripts.

The second autograph is dated 1723, and for a variety of reasons is usually considered to be Bach's final word on the details of the music. The two- and three-part works are again grouped separately and in parallel, this time, however, entirely in ascending order of key. Bach prefaced the music with the following title: "Forthright instruction, wherewith lovers of the clavier, especially those desirous of learning, are shown in a clear way not only 1) to learn to play two voices clearly, but also after further progress 2) to deal correctly and well with three obbligate parts, moreover at the same time to obtain not only good ideas, but also to carry them out well, but most of all to achieve a cantabile style of playing, and thereby to acquire a strong foretaste of composition. Prepared by Joh. Seb. Bach, Capellmeister to his Serene Highness the Prince of Anhalt-Cöthen. Anno Christi 1723."

The intent is again tutorial, but Bach shows us now that he has a great deal more in mind than the simple development of finger dexterity. For these are lessons in taste as well as technique, and they are models for beginners in composition. But there is yet a third manuscript, dating also from 1723, and differing from the others in one very important respect: each two-part invention is followed immediately with the corresponding three-part sinfonia, thus forming a series of two-movement units not unlike the preludes and fugues of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*. According to Spitta, "... it cannot be doubted that the composer conceived each pair at the same time." There is, as he goes on to say, a correspondence of theme in several of the pairs, and a correspondence of mood in many others. Certainly, such conjunction of invention and sinfonia is strikingly effective in performance. Hence the pedagogical intent has been pushed far into the background. Freed of the necessity to match their difficulties to the player's abilities, the *Inventions and Sinfonias* stand on their own feet as pure music.

What is an invention? Bach, as we have seen, was not quite sure himself. Prior to 1723, the term had been used by the Italian composer Vitali as a title for pieces involving special tricks, and by Antonio Bonporti as a synonym for "suite." (Four of the latter's inventions were mistakenly reprinted in the *Bach Gesellschaft* collected edition.) Obviously, neither of these usages parallels Bach's, and his reasons for using the title remain a mystery. The term "*sinfonia*", though of far more common musical usage, is equally non-specific here. Originally, a sinfonia was almost any kind of an instrumental piece that was not a dance. By the end of the 17th century it had developed a rather specific form which, however, is not the form of these sinfonias by Bach.

Such confusions of terminology are not past understanding when we examine the music itself, for, in fact, there had been nothing quite like these pieces before. They contain both fugal and canonic writing, but they are neither fugues nor canons. Adopting the broad definition that the *Inventions* are studies in two-part counterpoint, one can trace for them a long lineage, beginning perhaps with the ancient form of the *bicenium*, a piece for two instruments or voices. But there is a harmonic direction in these pieces by Bach which is totally absent in the earlier works, and it is one of the miracles of the *Two-Part Inventions*, even more so than the *Sinfonias*, that such a complex harmonic movement is established and maintained with such an economy of notes. And the *bicenia*, *fantasias* and other early forms were melodically rather short of breath, and needed an infusion of new thematic material at frequent intervals.

A critic (Hermann Kretzschmar), in commenting on the predominance of German music, put his finger on the *Two- and Three-Part Inventions* as the source of the very principles which established that predominance. Those principles might

be itemized as the way a small melodic motif is stated and developed; the way its melodic, rhythmic, harmonic, and contrapuntal implications are completely fulfilled and exhausted in the course of the composition; the way this single thin slice of musical material is used as the sole generator of a work. So much is the secret, the achievement, and the “invention” of the *Inventions*. With the benefit of historical hindsight, we know what it led to.

JAMES GOODFRIEND

### *A word about the piano*

The instrument represented on this disc is a pre-World War II Steinway which answers to CD 318, and to which I feel a greater devotion than to any other piano that I have encountered. For the past few years it has been reserved exclusively for our sessions at Columbia Records – not as great a sacrifice on the part of the makers as you might imagine, since no one else has ever expressed the slightest interest in it. This has enabled me to carry out some rather radical experiments in regard to the action of this piano, in effect, to try to design an instrument for baroque repertoire which can add to the undeniable resource of the modern piano something of the clarity and tactile felicity of the harpsichord.

For those sessions in which more recent or more conventionally pianistic repertoire has been our concern, we have not made any special demand upon this instrument, but prior to each of the Bach sessions of the past few years, CD 318 has undergone major surgery. The alignment of such essential mechanical matters as the distance of the hammer from the strings, the “after-touch” mechanism, etc. has been earnestly reconsidered in accordance with my sober conviction that no

piano need feel duty-bound to always sound like a piano. Old 318, if released from its natural tendency in that direction, could probably be prevailed upon to give us a sound of such immediacy and clarity that those qualities of non-legato so essential to Bach would be gleefully realized.

In my opinion, the present disc brings us within reach of this objective. The operation performed just before the sessions which produced the *Inventions* was so successful that we plunged joyfully into the recording without allowing old 318 its usual post-operative recuperation. Consequently, our enthusiasm for the rather extraordinary sound it now possessed allowed us to minimize the one minor after-effect which it had sustained – a slight nervous tic in the middle register which in slower passages can be heard emitting a sort of hiccup – and to carry on with the sessions without stopping to remedy this minor defect. I must confess that having grown somewhat accustomed to it I now find this charming idiosyncrasy entirely worthy of the remarkable instrument which produced it. I might even rationalize the matter by comparing it with the clavichord’s propensity for an intra-tone vibrato. However, in our best of all worlds we would hope to preserve the present sound while reducing the hiccup effect so, as the television card says on those occasions when sound and video portions go their separate ways

– “STAY TUNED IN – WE’RE FIXING IT”

GLENN GOULD