Produced by Andrew Kazdin

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GLENN GOULD
PIANO
BACH: TOCCATAS
VOL. 2

SIDE 1
Toccata in C Minor, BWV 911
Toccata in G Minor, BWV 915
All selections are in the public domain

The toccatas of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) culminate the development of a genre whose origin, while perhaps not lost, is certainly beclouded. During the Renaissance, the term "toccata" (or tuckett, *touche*, or *Tasch*) referred to brass fanfares at ceremonies. The earliest known fanfare toccata dates from 1393, and its type was to endure in the *toccata* (that is, overture) to Monteverdi's *Orfeo* (1607) and in the *sinfonie* of the eighteenth-century Italian opera.

Early in the sixteenth century, however, the term also identified lute pieces and, by the end of the century, several kinds of keyboard compositions as well. Some, such as the *toccate legature e durezze*, are slow, syncopated, chromatic, dissonant and even imitative. Others, the *toccate in modo di tromboetta*, appear to be fanfares for the keyboard. Still others, with no additional title save for mode or tone, contain sustained notes and scale passages that alternate with imitative sections. This type first appeared in print in 1591 but appears to have been already a part of a keyboard tradition begun in Venice around 1575. This "Venetian" toccata evolved into the familiar keyboard toccata whose first phase included compositions by Andrea Gabrieli, Annibale Padovano and Claudio Merulo.

In his *The Origins of the Toccata*, Murray C. Bradshaw lists a number of assumptions that have been made about the toccata: Supposedly, 1) it was the first non-vocal, purely instrumental music associated with neither liturgy, dance, program nor extramusical function, grounded in itself rather than in someone else's theme for which it supplied variations, and was therefore the second major free type of organ music, the first being the prelude; 2) it represented improvisational practice and 3) grew out of the keyboard *intonazione* which stemmed from the prelude; 4) basic to its structure was the contrast between imitative sections and virtuoso passages; 5) and because its tonalities were ambiguous, the title type, *Toccata del IV tono*, for example, must have been solely a tradition.

Bradshaw believes that the origin of the toccata and *intonazione* of which it is an enlargement lies in the *falsibordone* which was, shortly before 1480, a part song type that closely followed the notes and forms of the Gregorian psalm tones for Vespers. The *falsobordone* became very popular in the sixteenth century and consequently was, in the simplest instrumental guises, transcribed verbatim from the vocal originals. By 1557, keyboard transcriptions of psalm tones existed with most of the characteristics generally assigned to *intonazioni* and their presence resolves the mystery of the "birth, full-grown," of Andrea Gabrieli's *intonazioni*, which served as preludes to give the pitch to singers. Vocal *falsibordoni* (unembellished, then embellished), keyboard *falsibordoni*, *intonazioni*, and almost all Venetian toccatas published between 1591 and 1604 were based on psalm tones. However, the embellishments and divisions that had been added hid not only the form of the psalm tones but their tunes, which functioned as *canti firmi*. Thus, almost none of the five assumptions is valid.

The further history of the toccata to the time of Bach can be traced in somewhat greater detail in the notes to Volume I of Glenn Gould's complete recording of Bach's toccatas. The three major toccata types that came down from the Renaissance through the Baroque and which are represented in Bach's total output of toccatas, are 1) the Southern and Central German type that served as introduction to a suite (the only example by Bach is in his Sixth Partita); 2) the North German type, as composed by Buxtehude. This represents the toccata as "contrasting" form, the so-called Gothic toccata with its free and rhapsodic toccata, prelude or fantasia followed by a fugue—a work with two separate movements of about equal size (as in Bach's organ toccatas and fantasias); 3) the toccata as a "mosaic" form, a composite work, as in Froberger's Southern German style deriving from the Italian model of Frescobaldi, as in Bach's seven clavier toccatas. (However, Bach's clavier toccatas also differ from his earlier and less sophisticated organ toccatas in being more stylistically international by mingling Italian, French, and South German elements with the North German.)

Free instrumental polyphony characterizes the clavier toccatas. The slow movements progress in a stately fashion, often richly lyrical, sometimes with recitativelike melodic snatches, but more often with highly expressive lines which sing against a strong individual bass line and active inner parts. These slow movements do not reproduce the embellished long-lined melodies, the relatively stable bass lines, and the chordal inner voices of the slow movements of concertos or sonatas. With two possible exceptions, dance rhythms are absent. The toccatas embrace improvisations, rhapsodies, fantasias, adagios, and simple, energetic, instrumental fugues that avoid the learned style and often end with an impetuous toccata gesture in the coda.

The cheerful Toccata in C Minor (BWV 911) comes from the mature Bach and was probably written in 1720 at Cöthen. Its first part begins with free-running improvisatory passages in bravura style. An *Adagio* eventually leads to the first fugue. A few bars of improvisation separate the first from the second part in which a double fugue, built on the same subject as that for the first fugue, ends with a coda that reasserts the toccata idea with adagio and presto flourishes. The subject does not always enter at regularly spaced intervals, and flourishes hide the conventional entries. Similarly, brilliant passagework eventually obliterates the double-fugue entries. The return of the improvisatory *Adagio* and its flowering into the presto section recapitulates in miniature the basic gestures of the entire toccata. (This analytic sketch suggests a four-movement work plus an interlude and coda; some analysts hear the piece in only three movements since the fugues, built as they are on the same subject, can be perceived as a single movement with a short interruption.)

The Toccata in E Minor, BWV 914, was probably written in 1730 at Weimar and reveals the influence of the North Germans Buxtehude and Pachelbel. (For example, the subject of the main fugue—as well as other themes—contains figures based on the alternation of two notes.) Part one of the Toccata begins in the style of the free, unbarred preludes of the French harpsichord school. If one associates "learned techniques" with the word "fugue," what dry academic devices must the term "double fugue" suggest! Yet, in the double fugue that follows, Bach gives us a lyrical, melancholy piece, at times meditative, at times yearning. In the strong, improvisatory fantasia that follows—the most important section of part one—adagio recitatives occasionally blossom into melismas at emotional high points with full chords and lutelike arpeggiaturas nervously alternating with runs and scales idiomatic to the harpsichord. Part two exposes a strict, fully-developed, three-part fugue, lively despite its chromaticism. A passage recalling the rhythmic abandon of the slow sections concludes the Toccata.

SIDE 2
Toccata in G Major, BWV 916
Toccata in E Minor, BWV 914**
** Previously released on MS 6688. Produced by Paul Myers

Also from Weimar, about 1710, comes the urbane Toccata in G Minor, BWV 915, which features long fugues like those in the D-minor and F-sharp minor Toccatas recorded in Volume I of this series, but its five sections are not long enough to be called movements. In the first part, a brief introductory allegro improvisational flourish leads to a somewhat longer prelude, an Adagio arioso or developed recitative. The third section, a Handelian fugue in B-flat, alternates *tutti* and *soli* (the oldest manuscript of this toccata exhibits the dynamic markings, *forte* and *piano*) as it moves away from the tonic, an unusual procedure in Bach's toccatas. What might be interpreted as an interlude, an *Adagio* fantasia in G minor, and the prelude serve to frame the Fugue. The recitative quality of the interlude gives way as it accelerates and ends brilliantly so as to introduce the second part of the Toccata with another equally Handelian fugue, about twice as long as its companion. A codalike improvisation repeats the flourish heard at the beginning.

One copy of the Toccata in G Major, BWV 916, probably written at Weimar in 1709, has come down to us in the hand of Bach's pupil Heinrich Nikolaus Gerber: it bears the inscription, "concerto seu toccata," (concerto or toccata). Like the Organ Toccata in C Minor, BWV 564, it introduces the North German keyboard style into the Italian three-movement concerto form. The first movement, *Presto*, alternates rapid "solo" passages with sections of chordal texture, just as an orchestral concerto would juxtapose the concertino with the *tutti* or *ripieni*. The lyrical adagio movement in E minor gives the necessary respite before the *Allegro* fugue brings the Toccata to a close.

– Peter Elliot Stone

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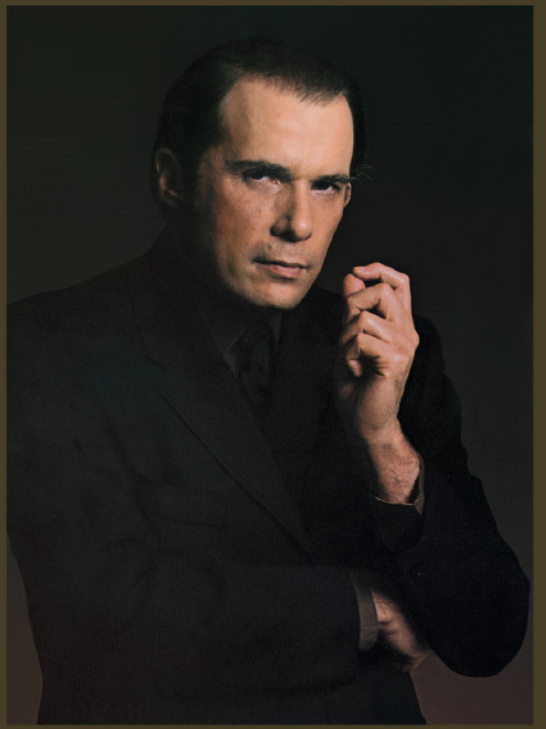

Johann Sebastian Bach 1685–1750

Toccatas Vol. 2

1	**Toccata in C minor** BWV 911 c-Moll · en *ut* mineur	11:16
2	**Toccata in G minor** BWV 915 g-Moll · en *sol* mineur	8:46
3	**Toccata in G major** BWV 916 G-Dur · en *sol* majeur	8:55
4	**Toccata in E minor** BWV 914 e-Moll · en *mi* mineur	8:36

Total Time 37:55

Glenn Gould piano

Original LP: M 35831 · Released February 3, 1980
Recording: Eaton Auditorium, Toronto, May 15/16, 1979 [1]; June 12, 1979 [2];
May 15, 1979 [3]; Columbia 30th Street Studio, New York City, April 8, 1963 [4]
Producers: Andrew Kazdin [1–3]; Paul Myers [4]
Recording Engineers: Fred Plaut, Kent Warden & Frank Dean Dennowitz
Cover Design: Nancy Greenberg · Cover Photo: Don Hunstein · Liner Notes: Peter Eliot Stone
LP Matrix: AL 35831 [1/2], BL 35831 [3/4]

Toccata in E minor previously released on MS 6498 (CD 17)

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PETER ELIOT STONE