

J.S. Bach

Klavierbüchlein für Wilhelm Friedemann Bach

Yuan Sheng *clavichord*

Johann Sebastian Bach 1685-1750
Klavierbüchlein für W.F. Bach

1. Applicatio in C BWV 994	1'09	17. No.4 in D BWV 850/1	1'00				
2. Prelude in C BWV 924	1'07	18. No.5 in E minor BWV 855a	1'43				
3. Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten BWV 691	1'21	19. No.6 in E BWV 854/1	1'36				
4. Prelude in D minor BWV 926	1'15	20. No.7 in F BWV 856/1	1'11				
5. Jesu, meine Freude BWV 753	1'35	21. No.8 in C-sharp BWV 848/1	1'36				
6. Allemande in G minor BWV 836	2'49	22. No.9 in C-sharp minor BWV 849/1	3'05				
7. Allemande in G minor BWV 837	1'03	23. No.10 in E-flat minor BWV 853/1	4'14				
8. Prelude in F BWV 927	0'58	24. No.11 in F minor BWV 857/1	2'25				
9. Prelude in G minor BWV 930	2'41	Pièce pour le Clavecin					
10. Prelude in F BWV 928	1'46	25. I. Allemande	3'08				
11. Minuet in G BWV 841	1'20	26. II. Courante	2'34				
12. Minuet in G minor BWV 842	0'59	27. Prelude in C BWV 924a	0'58				
13. Minuet in G BWV 843	2'10	28. Prelude in D BWV 925	1'34				
Praeludium		29. Prelude in E minor BWV 932	0'55				
14. No.1 in C BWV 846a	1'54	30. Prelude in A minor BWV 931	0'50				
15. No.2 in C minor BWV 847/1	1'23	31. Baß-Skizze in G minor	0'38				
16. No.3 in D minor BWV 851/1	1'04	32. Fuga à 3 in C BWV 953	2'05				
				Praecambulums		Partita di Signore Steltzeln	
				33. No.1 in C BWV 772	1'33	51. I. Ouverture	4'36
				34. No.2 in D minor BWV 775	1'15	52. II. Air Italien	1'31
				35. No.3 in E minor BWV 778	1'32	53. III. Bourrée	1'12
				36. No.4 in F BWV 779	0'56	54. IV. Minuet	2'52
				37. No.5 in G BWV 781	1'04		
				38. No.6 in A minor BWV 784	1'10	Fantasias	
				39. No.7 in B minor BWV 786	1'23	55. No.1 in C BWV 787	1'28
				40. No.8 in B-flat BWV 785	1'32	56. No.2 in D minor BWV 790	1'58
				41. No.9 in A BWV 783	1'34	57. No.3 in E minor BWV 793	2'14
				42. No.10 in G minor BWV 782	1'44	58. No.4 in F BWV 794	1'20
				43. No.11 in F minor BWV 780	2'07	59. No.5 in G BWV 796	1'23
				44. No.12 in E BWV 777	3'40	60. No.6 in A minor BWV 799	1'47
				45. No.13 in E-flat BWV 776	1'58	61. No.7 in B minor BWV 801	2'02
				46. No.14 in D BWV 774	1'28	62. No.8 in B-flat BWV 800	1'52
				47. No.15 in C minor BWV 773	2'07	63. No.9 in A BWV 798	1'38
						64. No.10 in G minor BWV 797	2'17
				Suite in A BWV 824		65. No.11 in F minor BWV 795	3'00
				48. I. Allemande	3'52	66. No.12 in E BWV 792	1'44
				49. II. Courante	2'22	67. No.13 in E-flat BWV 791	2'31
				50. III. Gigue	3'20	68. No.14 in D BWV 789	1'30
						69. No.15 in C minor BWV 788	2'34

The *Klavierbüchlein vor Wilhelm Friedemann Bach*, dated 1720 had a didactic goal. This collection of keyboard compositions was elaborated by J.S. Bach some years later to the well known *Inventionen and Sinfonia*. In the 18th century a keyboard player played every keyboard instrument: organ, clavichord and harpsichord, there was not a specialisation as we know today. The organ, with his liturgian function, was indispensable because of professional, read economical, reasons. The harpsichord was mainly used for “*Starcke Musik*” (loud music), as C.Ph.E. Bach described (1753), which means the accompanying of ensemble (consort). The clavichord was considered as a solo instrument (“*zum allein spielen*”, C.Ph.E. Bach) and was the instrument to play at home. Numerous works of J.S. Bach were written to play at home for studying or for “*besonderem ZeitVertreib*” (singular pastime). J.S. Bach considered the clavichord as the best instrument for personal use, dixit Nicolaus Forkel (1803), because it is able to express most adequate the finest thoughts.

In the 17th and 18th century the clavichord was also seen as the first instrument for practicing. The refined key control makes of this instrument the “*aller Spieler erste Grammatica*” (“*the keyboard players first grammatic*”, J.G. Walther, 1732) and “*das beste Instrument zum Studiren*” (“*the best Instrument for practising*”, N. Forkel about J.S. Bach).

The frontpage of the *Inventionen en Sinfonia*'s gives some important indications: “*Sincere introduction in which the lovers of the clavier...most of all may acquire a cantabile way of playing...*” This brings us to Johann Mattheson (1713) who pointed out that the “*Ouvertures, Sonatas, Toccatas, Suites & c. will be brought out at their best and most purely on a good clavichord, as on this very instrument the singing manner is expressed most cleanly, with sustain.*”

Matthesons view on the clavichord at the beginning of the 18th century wasn't an isolated fact from North-Germany. Indeed, also the Leipziger Thomascantor Johann Kuhnau acknowledged the qualities of the clavichord as it turns out in a letter to Mattheson (1725): “*I likewise did whatever was in my power on the Clavicordio,*

and was already of the same opinion as [stated in] the Orchester, that this instrument, quiet though it may be, offers the best service to exercise the best possible expression of harmony on any keyboard instrument”.

Karl Friederich Zelter, tutor of Felix Mendelssohn and friend of J.W. Goethe, made following remark on the clavichord with regard to J.S. Bach: “*One might be astonished that such a small instrument be this rich in sound, allowing to play cantabile pieces of exalted character, such as an adagio of Emanuel Bach, or to render his father's Chromatic Fantasy [BWV 903] on it with ardor. Therefore one may call the Klavier (clavichord in this case) weak, but not poor in tone.*”

The statement of N. Forkel (Bachs first biographer, 1803), as J.S. Bach preferred the clavichord above the harpsichord, being informed by the sons Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philipp Emanuel, is not surprising when one consults the 18th century sources concerning the qualities of the clavichord.

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Translation: Joris Potvlieghe

Het *Klavierbüchlein voor Wilhelm Friedemann Bach* dateert van 1720 en had een didactisch doel. Deze verzameling aan klaviercomposities werd door J.S. Bach enkele jaren later uitgewerkt tot de *Inventionen en Sinfonia*. In de 18de eeuw bespeelde een klavierist alle toetsinstrumenten: orgel, clavichord en clavecimbel. Het orgel, met zijn liturgische functie, was om professionele en economische redenen onontbeerlijk. Het clavecimbel werd voornamelijk gebruikt voor “Starcke Musik”, zo schrijft C.Ph.E. Bach, waarmee de begeleiding van het ensemble wordt bedoeld. Het clavichord fungeerde als solo-instrument (“zum allein spielen”, C.Ph.E.Bach) en werd thuis bespeeld. J.S. Bach beschouwde het clavichord als het beste instrument voor persoonlijk musiceren, aldus N. Forkel, omdat dit het beste in staat is de fijnste ideeën uit te drukken.

In de 17de en 18de eeuw werd het clavichord ook beschouwd als het oefeninstrument bij uitstek. De verfijnde toetscontrole bij het clavichordspelen maakt dit instrument tot *aller Spieler erste Grammatica* (J.G. Walther, 1732) en *das beste Instrument zum Studiren* (N. Forkel over J.S. Bach). Deze quotes beantwoorden de vraag over het type klavierinstrument dat de jonge Wilhelm Friedemann thuis zal bepeeld hebben.

De inleiding bij de *Inventionen en Sinfonia*'s, een uitgewerkte versie van het *Klavierbüchlein voor Wilhelm Friedemann*, geeft aanwijzingen over de speelaard: “*Aufrichtige Anleitung/ Wormit Denen Liebhabern des Clavires [...] am allermeisten aber eine cantable Art im Spielen zu erlangen [...]*”. Dit brengt ons bij Johann Mattheson (1713) die beweerde dat “*Ouverturen, Sonaten, Toccaten, Suiten, &c. am besten und reinlichsten auff einem guten Clavicordio herausgebracht/ als woselbst man die Sing-Art viel deutlicher!... ausdrücken kan.*” J.S. Bach legt in de *Inventionen en Sinfonia*'s de nadruk op een cantabele voordrachtskunst terwijl Johann Mattheson rond dezelfde tijd aangeeft dat het clavichord het instrument bij uitstek is waarop dat kan gerealiseerd worden. Kunnen we het woordgebruik “*Clavires*” op Bachs titelpagina interpreteren als “*clavichord*”? De relatie tussen een cantabele voordrachtskunst en het clavichord wordt door deze bronnen alleszins overtuigend

verzegeld. Met het woord “*Clavier*” bedoelde men in de eerste plaats “*clavichord*” zoals blijkt uit Adlungs *Anleitung zu der musikalischen Gelahrtheit* (1758): “*Daher, ob schon das Wort Clavier einen weitläufigen Verstand hat, versteht man doch vorzüglich das Clavichord dadurch.*”

Matthesons opvattingen over het clavichord aan het begin van de 18de eeuw is geen geïsoleerd feit uit Noord-Duitsland. Ook de Leipzige Thomascantor Johann Kuhnau (1660-1722) erkent de kwaliteiten van het clavichord zoals blijkt uit een brief van 8 december 1717 die Johann Mattheson publiceerde in *Critica Musica* (pub. 1725): “*Ich that auch, was ich auf meinem Clavicordio vermochte, und war schon damahls mit dem Orchestre in diesem Stücke einerley Meinung, daß ein solches, ob gleich stilles, Instrument zur Probe und guten Expression der Harmonie auf dem Claviere am besten diene.*”

Karl Friederich Zelter (1758-1832), leraar van Felix Mendelssohn en goede bevriend met Johann Wolfgang Goethe, maakt volgende opmerking over het clavichord met betrekking tot J.S. Bach: “*Man könnte sich verwundern, daß ein kleines Instrument so klangreich ist, sangbar darauf zu spielen und erhabene Stücke von großem Charakter, wie die adagio des Emanuel Bach und die Chromatische Fantasie seines Vater [BWV 903] so tüchtig darauf vortragen zu können.*” De beroemde quote van N. Forkel (1803) dat J.S. Bach het liefste op het clavichord speelde, komt van zijn zonen Carl Philipp Emanuel en Wilhelm Friedemann en is niet verwonderlijk als men de toegedichte kwaliteiten van het clavichord andere 18de eeuwse bronnen erop naslaat.

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Yuan Sheng has gained international recognition through his extensive performances in more than twenty countries. New York Times wrote that “Mr. Sheng’s ear for balance is unfailing.....the attraction was entirely visceral.” New York Concert Review proclaims that “Mr. Sheng is an artist of the highest quality” The renowned music author David Dubal states that: “Just listen to him, you will be touched!”

Mr. Sheng has performed in Carnegie Hall in New York, Cadogan Hall in London, Ford Performing Arts Center in Toronto, Seoul National Center for the Performing Arts as well as National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing, and Shanghai Concert Hall in Shanghai, China. He has been heard and seen on WQXR in New York, WGBH in Boston, NPR in U.S.A, National Radio Station of Spain, National Radio Station of France,

National Television of Poland, China Central TV, and Beijing Music Radio.

As a soloist, Mr. Sheng has performed with Tenerife Symphony of Spain, Oradea State Philharmonic of Romania, Kazakhstan National Symphony, National Symphony of Cuba, National Philharmonic of the Philippines as well as China Philharmonic. As a chamber musician, Mr. Sheng he has performed with the Shanghai String Quartet, violinists Aaron Rosand, Arnold Steinhardt, Vadim Repin, as well as cellist Andres Diaz.

Mr. Sheng's performances and research on the music of Bach have attracted international attention in recent years. The New York Times said that "The A major and A minor Preludes and Fugues from Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier Book I, were models of clarity, balance and proportion. That is not to say that they were straightforward or unmediated: Mr. Sheng made the A minor Prelude into a fiery drama, with the equally energetic but stunningly voiced Fugue as an otherworldly rejoinder." The International Piano Magazine, considered Yuan Sheng "The nation (China)'s premier interpreter of Bach."

His understanding and command on harpsichord, clavichord and early pianos has also generated highest acclaim. In reviewing his recital of All-Beethoven program on an 1805 Kathonig piano, the Boston Intelligencer states that "Sheng had absorbed this music so thoroughly that a listener might easily have imagined the composer at the keyboard."

Mr. Sheng records under Piano Classics label and NCPA (China National Center for the Performing Arts) Record label. His six album recordings of works by Bach and a Three-Disc Set of works by Chopin performed on an 1845 Pleyel piano have been released internationally. His recording of Bach's Goldberg Variations on harpsichord (NCPA Classics) won 2019 CMIC Music Awards' Best Classical Performance Award.

Born to a family of musicians in Beijing, Yuan Sheng began his music studies with his mother at age five, continuing them later at the Central Conservatory with Professors Qifang Li, Huili Li, and Guangren Zhou. From 1991 to 1997 Yuan Sheng was a scholarship student of Solomon Mikowsky at the Manhattan School of Music in New York City, where he completed his Bachelor and Master of Music degrees. His interest in the music of Bach inspired him to study intensively with Rosalyn Tureck. Yuan Sheng is a professor of piano at the Beijing Central Conservatory of Music.

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Recording: Organroxx
Sound engineer: Paul Baluwé
Artistic Producer: Nico Declerck
Clavichord after Jacob Adlung, 1726, built by Joris Potvlieghe 2018, n° 50
Tuning by Joris Potvlieghe
Clavichord and artist photo by Joris Potvlieghe
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