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## Bach: Präludium und Fuge BWV 552 (Arr.)



Title	Präludium und Fuge in Es-Dur für Orgel BWV 552 von Johann Sebastian Bach
Time of Origin	1928
Premiere	10 November 1929, Berlin
Duration	ca. 16 min.

In terms of his compositional output, Schönberg's orchestrations of two chorale preludes as well as the Prelude and Fugue in E-flat Major by Johann Sebastian Bach belong to the decade that witnessed his pioneering creation of a new "method of composition with twelve tones related only to one another," which he associated with the hegemonic claim to thereby secure the "supremacy" of the music of the German-speaking world for another century. In this understanding of history, Bach, who was always relevant for Schönberg, formed the starting point of a long line of tradition: "I used to say: Bach is the first twelve-tone composer. That was a joke, of course. [...] Undoubtedly, he possessed a deep insight into the hidden secrets of tonal relationships. He certainly was able to present his thoughts clearly and comprehensibly." ("Bach," 1950) In his studies of Bach's works, which he also used as illustrative material in a composition master class he taught at the Prussian Academy of Arts in the 1920s, Schönberg analyzed form, compositional technique, and counterpoint. A large number of freely-composed organ works in the edition he used show corresponding entries, corrections to the score, and indications relating to the form of possible arrangements. In 1928, when he had already further developed the possibilities of the twelve-tone method in works for solo piano and chamber music, and while also composing orchestral works and the opera "Moses und Aron," Schönberg arranged for orchestra Johann Sebastian Bach's monumental Prelude and Fugue in E-flat Major (BWV 552) from the third part of the "Clavier-Übung." For the premiere on November 10, 1929, Wilhelm Furtwängler conducted the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. Anton Webern, who conducted a performance in Vienna the following day, enthusiastically reported to his teacher: "this is an indescribable sound! [...] And it is so wonderfully arranged. Lord, how the end of the fugue sounds!" (Letter of November 13, 1929) In his arrangement of the work, Schoenberg emphasized the organ character through symphonic means, and did not attempt to imitate the registration, but rather "illuminated the construction of the thematic development through his orchestration [...]" (Erwin Stein). The individual motives move through the instrumental groups as thematic sound cells, creating the effect of a "Klangfarbenmelodie" (tone-color melody), as the composer had described it in his "Harmonielehre" of 1911. "In doing so, however, I have taken the position that I am making a transcription and should at least be allowed such freedom as Bach allows himself in chorale arrangements." (Letter to Anton Webern, November 13, 1934)

