

HK PHIL X TAI KWUN
CHAMBER MUSIC SERIES

THE ART OF FUGUE

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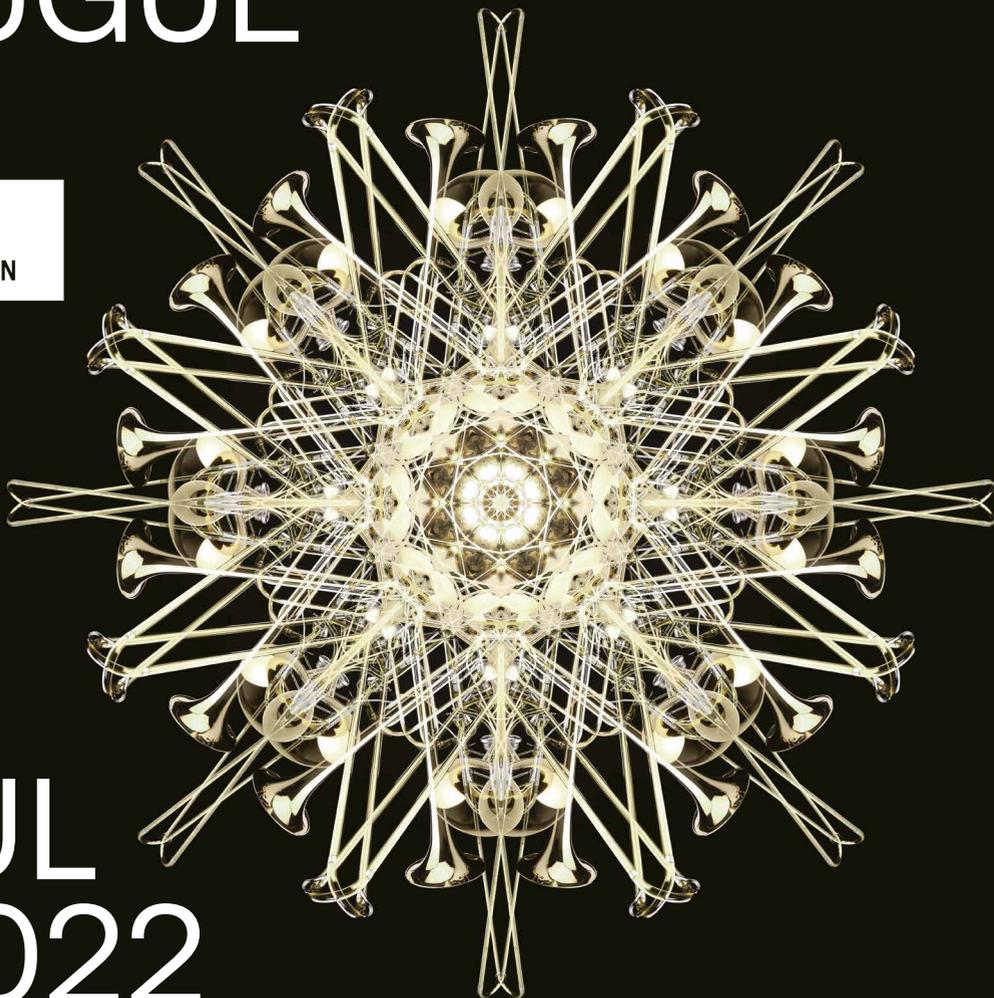
大館
TAI KWUN

6
JUL
2022

WED 7:30PM

大館賽馬會立方
JC Cube, Tai Kwun

港樂 X 大館
室樂音樂會系列
賦格的藝術



港樂長號小組
HK Phil
Trombone Section

賦格的藝術

HK PHIL X TAI KWUN: CHAMBER MUSIC SERIES THE ART OF FUGUE



P. 1

巴赫 JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

《賦格的藝術》，BWV 1080 (長號四重奏，蘇爾改編)
The Art of the Fugue, BWV 1080
(for Four Trombones, arranged by Ralph Sauer)

賦格九，十二度	Contrapunctus IX alla Duodecima	3'
賦格一，四聲部	Contrapunctus I a4	3'
賦格二，四聲部	Contrapunctus II a4	3'
賦格三，四聲部	Contrapunctus III a4	3'
賦格四，四聲部	Contrapunctus IV a4	4'
賦格五	Contrapunctus V	4'
賦格六，(減值法) 法國風格	Contrapunctus VI (per Diminutionem) in Stylo Francese	6'
賦格七，增值法與減值法	Contrapunctus VII per Augmentationem et Diminutionem	4'
賦格八，三聲部	Contrapunctus VIII a3	5'
賦格十，十度	Contrapunctus X alla Decima	4'
賦格十二，鏡像	Contrapunctus XII inversus	4'
賦格十三，鏡像	Contrapunctus XIII inversus	3'

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韋雅樂 長號

Jarod Vermette Trombone

湯奇雲 長號

Kevin Thompson Trombone

高基信 長號

Christian Goldsmith Trombone

區雅隆 低音長號

Aaron Albert Bass Trombone



請將手提電話及其他電子裝置調至靜音模式
Please set your mobile phone and other
electronic devices into silence mode



請勿拍照、錄音或錄影
No photography, recording or filming



請勿飲食
No eating or drinking



演奏期間請保持安靜
Please keep noise to a minimum
during the performance



請留待整首樂曲完結後才報以掌聲鼓勵
Please reserve your applause
until the end of the entire work

1685-1750

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

The Art of Fugue › BWV 1080
(for Four Trombones, arranged by
Ralph Sauer)



Bach

(Wikimedia Commons)

On the early evening of 7 May 1747, Johann Sebastian Bach – aged 62, and weary from a two-day journey from Leipzig – arrived at the Prussian royal seat of Potsdam. He intended to visit his second-born son Carl Philipp Emanuel, to see his first grandchild, and to witness for himself the famously musical court of Carl Philipp’s employer: King Frederick II (“the Great”) of Prussia. But without even the chance to change out of his travelling clothes, Bach was summoned directly to the royal palace. A Berlin newspaper described what happened next:

[The King] went, at [Bach’s] entrance to the Forte-piano and condescended to play, by himself and without any preparation, a theme for Kapellmeister Bach, which he should execute in a fugue. This was done so happily by the aforementioned Kapellmeister, that not only His Majesty was pleased to show his satisfaction, but also all those present were seized with astonishment.

In front of his court, Frederick then asked Bach to improvise a three-voice fugue. When Bach succeeded, Frederick then asked for the unthinkable: a six-voice fugue. At which point, before the assembled ranks of his peers, the greatest contrapuntalist in history was forced to concede defeat. But Bach’s defeat was only temporary. Within two months of his evening at Potsdam, he presented Frederick with that impossible six-voice fugue – part of a whole series of superb workings-out of the king’s theme in flawless counterpoint. He called it *Das Musikalische Opfer* (The Musical Offering).

Musical contests of this sort were part of the job description for an 18th century composer. They could be part of an elegant intellectual game (as with Bach and Frederick); or a flamboyant

public display (Mozart once entertained a cheering Prague audience late into the night by improvising on themes that they shouted out or scribbled down for him). For an organist, though, then as now, improvisation was simply a basic professional requirement. Bach's ability in this sphere was well-known, and was a source of fascination to his contemporaries. Add to that the fact that eminent musicians of the baroque era often published works intended to expound their own prowess, at the same time as serving an educational function (such as Bach's own *Clavier-Übung* of 1731-1741 – the title literally means “Keyboard Exercise”) and we can start to understand why Bach, for at least the last decade of his life (though he had almost certainly contemplated it long before that) laboured on a treatise designed to lay out the full scope of his mastery in the most complex and learned form of improvisation – the Fugue.

A Fugue is often mistaken for a fixed musical form. A single “subject” (theme), taken up consecutively by two or more “voices” (different musical lines), is woven through ingenious and imaginative counterpoint into a musical texture of massive, often thrilling, richness and complexity. In fact, it's less a rigid form than an imaginative process – an endlessly adaptable creative technique, and in *The Art of Fugue*, Bach demonstrates its potential over some 20 fabulously imaginative and superbly-worked fugues (each described as *Contrapunctus*), all based on a single subject. Since his youth, he'd sought to master every aspect of the composer's craft; in 1705 he had walked (he couldn't afford anything more) for 280 miles to Lübeck to hear the great contrapuntal master Dieterich Buxtehude play the organ – and, as Bach later explained it, “to comprehend one thing and another about my art”.

There are echoes of Buxtehude's practice in *The Art of Fugue*, and it's possible to see the whole collection as a mighty summation of the art of counterpoint at the very end of its long period of dominance in European music. Bach seems to have worked upon the collection from the early 1740s onwards, struggling against worsening eyesight (he is now believed to have suffered from diabetes, and at the end of his life he was almost blind). The final *Contrapunctus* tails off, mid-flow – forever unfinished at Bach's death on 28 July 1750. It's one of a



Title page of the first edition (Schübler, Zella, 1751) of *The Art of Fugue* (Wikimedia Commons)

series of puzzles that surround *The Art of Fugue*. Is this a last, poignant gesture of an old master whose genius was evidently willing but whose body, at the last, was so heartbreakingly weak? Or is it (as some have suggested), a deliberate decision – Bach, the supreme teacher, handing over to his students: “I’ve shown you the way – now you can complete it”?

Meanwhile, for clarity, Bach wrote each fugue in “open score”, with one musical line to each staff of the score. While it’s generally accepted that he conceived this music for the harpsichord, this has left performers’ options gloriously open. Ensembles ranging from string quartets to full orchestras to (as today) trombone ensembles have all chosen to engage with these brilliant, deeply moving final thoughts of one of music’s most enduring masters. In the first printed edition, Bach’s son Carl Philipp Emanuel (who arranged for the work to be published in May 1751) added a note of his own at the end of that final unfinished fugue: “At the point where the composer introduces the name BACH in the countersubject to this fugue, the composer died.” (In German musical notation, the notes B flat, A, C and B natural spell “Bach”.) Scholars have disputed that, but no-one has seriously disputed Emanuel’s proud description of this last testament to his father’s genius: “Those who are knowledgeable in the history of music will admit that such a work, in which the entire study of fugue is so thoroughly elaborated upon a single subject is unprecedented.” It remains unsurpassed.

Programme notes by Richard Bratby



JAROD VERMETTE Trombone

Joining the HK Phil as Principal Trombone in 1996 at the age of 20, Jarod has performed Frank Martin's *Ballade* and Derek Bourgeois' *Concerto* with the HK Phil. In 2012 he performed John Mackey's *Harvest Concerto* with the Hong Kong Wind Philharmonia and Roland Szentpali's *Trombone Scenes* with the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts Brass Ensemble. Jarod has performed with the Boston, Kyushu and Chautauqua Symphony Orchestras, and Hong Kong Sinfonietta and Hong Kong Bach Choir.



KEVIN THOMPSON Trombone

Kevin joined the HK Phil in 2016. He has also performed with major orchestras in Norway, Sweden, the UK, Canada, Malaysia, Singapore, Korea, Macau and Mainland China. With these orchestras he has toured and recorded in North America, Asia, Australia and Europe, and played in many of the great concert halls of the world. Dedicated to promoting the euphonium as a solo instrument, Kevin has recorded two critically-acclaimed solo euphonium recordings, and has showcased the instrument at recitals and masterclasses.



CHRISTIAN GOLDSMITH Trombone

American trombonist Christian is a player of versatility. His diverse background includes orchestral playing, chamber music, big band, marching band, concert band, jazz and pop music. Winner of the USC and Young Musicians Foundation Concerto Competitions and the Pasadena Young Musician's Competition, Christian was invited to take part in the Pacific Music Festival in Japan, and went on to win the principal trombone position with the Macao Orchestra. He joined the HK Phil in 2018.



AARON ALBERT Bass Trombone

Aaron joined the HK Phil as bass trombonist in 2020. He held the bass trombone position in the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, and has played with the Cleveland and the Philadelphia Orchestras. He has performed under the baton of Jaap van Zweden, Franz Welser-Möst, Fabio Luisi, Alan Gilbert, Gianandrea Noseda and Herbert Blomstedt. Aaron studied at The Juilliard School in Manhattan for his Bachelor's Degree in Music Performance.

Please click onto the name of each artist for a full-version biography.



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