

**BACH
TRUMPET
SOLO**

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

BACH SOLO *PER TROMBA*. REALLY?

Bach's extant oeuvre for a single-line instrument amounts to six solo works each for violin and cello, and a partita in four movements for solo flute. In some sense, the string pieces only partially fall into this category because of the violin and cello's capacity to play more than a single line: multiple stops offer a plenitude of texture in counterpoint as well as a strong chordal presence in almost all the great suites, sonatas and partitas. Similar to my edition (for Edition Peters) and recording of the Bach Cello Suites (Deux-Elles DXL 1207)), this solo trumpet anthology of miscellaneous Bach pieces offers a startlingly different listening experience to the original scores.

Many serious and ambitious musicians seek more material by Bach to play on their instrument. The challenge is to re-cast apposite works idiomatically without compromising their technical syntax or expressive identity. Because the chromatic valved trumpet was not established until over a century after Bach died, a 'performance practice' begins and ends with how the arrangement and performance unite in establishing a convincing and enjoyable new vehicle for Bach. It may draw on the benefits and insights of

'period' performance as much as instincts of how the composer might have received his music played on a modern trumpet.

As far as we know, Bach never reduced an existing multi-voice work to a solo one. He did, however, expand solo pieces into new multi-voiced creations. The Prelude of the Partita in E major (BWV 1006) for solo violin was famously transformed into the orchestral *sinfonia* for the Town Council Cantata, 'Wir danken' (BWV 29) for performance on 27th August 1731. There are also various solo harpsichord sonatas and organ concertos by contemporaries (Vivaldi as the predominant figure) where Bach toys with the originals in a conceit of free-wheeling spontaneity. These are works where the recreational and playful Bach is distinguishable from the composer designing collections, published and in manuscript form, with an eye to posterity. A case in point are the unaccompanied violin sonatas and partitas, written out by Bach in a fine calligraphic copy, but also existing in versions for harpsichord (BWVs 964 and 968 after BWVs 1003 and 1005) where the composer realised harmonic and contrapuntal progressions from solo-line material, often only insinuated in the original.

Improvisation and fantasy define much of the solo string music. In this light, rigorous contrapuntal re-composition for the keyboard becomes less critical than providing textural and discursive continuity. Jacob Adlung (*Anleitung zu der musikalischen Gelahrtheit* (Erfurt 1758)) spells out how the unaccompanied violin ‘can very easily be played on the keyboard’ and Johann Friedrich Agricola (*Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* (Berlin 1775)) writes, ‘Bach often played them on the clavichord, adding whatever harmonies he found necessary’. The implication, as Andreas Staier has noted in his recording (Das Alte Werk 3984-21461-2), is that Bach would have done this on the spur of the moment, and that no two performances, or play-throughs, would ever have been the same.

The practical considerations of turning solo pieces into workable multi-voiced keyboard works have strong parallels when reverse engineering is applied by modern-day arrangers and players, i.e. turning keyboard music ‘back on itself’ and pretending that such examples started life in a solo form. I have chosen pieces which I believe are especially suited to solo Bach *senza basso*. No effort is made to justify this on grounds other than a fascination with the process of recontextualising a small body of

work where Bach becomes susceptible to an unusually fluid, often maverick and relatively ephemeral text.

As with the cello suites adapted for trumpet – but perhaps more so here – newly configured passages require idiomatic solutions through careful registral adjustment. Decisions must be made on what chords to include (in various new melodic configurations) and what to leave out, especially when they are not essential to the musical argument or flow, and what, in general, requires further melodic inflection. The matter of register is not just driven by ease of execution, but how the revised text can create a coherent narrative of connected melodic and harmonic elements, often necessarily distilled in a single-line instrument reading. Aural memory, from one bar to the next is what allows the listener to be satisfied (or not) by the organic evolution of line, while also permitting the player to make convincing choices in matters of breathing, articulation, dynamics and – crucially – rhetorical expression.

The choice of music depends on where Bach’s own compositional process has a strong horizontal emphasis in the first place. The two examples taken from the Well-Tempered Clavier are those for which the melodic ►

curvature in the preludes primarily serves to lead the harmonic argument, and not to follow a simultaneous collaborative dialogue. The same qualities are observable in the Prelude and Fugue in D minor for organ where Bach expands on the fugue of the G minor Sonata for solo violin (BWV 1001), offering us a unique opportunity to turn Bach in on himself and return the multi-part version to solo territory – partly ‘as it was’ but made idiomatic for the trumpet. The fugues are chosen where ‘subject’ and ‘answer’, and episodes, roll out effectively in a single line, similar to the Prelude of Cello Suite no. 5. Other short pieces are, in effect, single melodic lines sequenced by (usually French) clavecin-style figuration, such as the richly adorned allemandes where melody appears to ingest harmony by default.

The twin pillars of this project are the *manualiter* keyboard Toccatas in D minor (abridged) and D major, BWVs 913 & 912 respectively, two of seven early works which Bach probably conceived in Weimar from 1707. Here, the extemporised argument – in often dramatically contrasted sections – evokes the through-composed ‘stylus fantasticus’ tradition of Bach’s early mentors, Buxtehude, Böhm and Reinken.

This extravagant and noble gestural world encourages the arranger to ‘make-believe’ that these toccatas are elaborations of an unaccompanied piece, since so much of the writing distinguishes between a thread of primary material and the textural upholstery around it. The fugal sections in both works are strikingly methodical and allow each voice to appear logically in a solo line. Also consistent in this mini-oeuvre is the sighing motif in the D major work, recalling Bach’s ‘Capriccio on the Departure of his Beloved Brother’, BWV 992; the sense of poignancy, loss and loneliness can transfer effectively to the purity of a solo trumpet.

These arrangements follow the example of Chad Kelly’s re-imagining of the organ Toccata and Fugue in D minor for solo violin for Rachel Podger on her ‘Tutta Sola’ recording for Channel Classics (CCSSA44422) but, unlike a solo violin, these sizeable works need here to be presented in defined sections to make them playable. Stamina aside, in assessing pacing and expressive range, there is always the resource of inspired past practice: Samuil Feinberg’s 1961 recording (described in his essay, ‘In Sound and Thought’) of the D major Toccata offers solutions which have

affected several interpretative decisions in preparing both toccatas.

Idiomatic figuration for the trumpet in the original's free-wheeling fashion remains true to Bach's harmonic progression on the clavecin, as in the Allemande and Sarabande of the English Suite no. 1 in A, BWV 806 – particularly the former where we have created 'doubles' on the repeats, a practice which Bach employs as separate variation movements later in the same work. More accurately, our embellishments are akin to Bach's practice of written-out ornaments in the repeats of the sarabandes of both the second and third suites in the same collection (BWVs 807 and 808).

The mature and elegant four-movement Partita for flute, BWV 1013, transfers without changes from the original, although presented here down a fourth, from A minor to E minor, to accommodate the registral characteristics of the trumpet. Telemann's Fantasia in A for flute (from a collection of twelve from 1732) is included as a mere whim. It concludes the programme in homage to a composer who wrote so lovingly for solo wind and brass, and who was a lifelong friend and admirer of Bach as well as mentor to Bach's

second son (and Telemann's Godson), Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach.

The 'Praecambulum' – re-purposed 'verbatim' for trumpet – is taken from Bach's miscellaneous violin and continuo sonata, BWV 1023. The notion of a single protagonist holding the stage is embryonically unveiled here, capturing how Bach always allows the performer the opportunity to re-engage freshly with his art around the endless creative possibilities he presents for us.

Special thanks to my close colleague and friend, Timothy Jones, who has shepherded me through this unusual project with generous suggestions, as well as providing solutions to puzzles which were beyond me. I take all blame but any text that rings out plausibly is likely to have had his involvement.

For the cover, I am grateful to the renowned and distinguished sculptor, John Davies for permission to use his 'Be a Phoenix' pastel-and-pencil drawing from 1998. It perfectly captures the idea and stimulus behind this fleeting re-imagining of JSB. ■

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

JONATHAN FREEMAN-ATTWOOD

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood is the fourteenth Principal of the Royal Academy of Music. His commitment to education spans over nearly forty years, within which time he has also established himself as a recording producer, trumpet player, writer and broadcaster. In the early years of his career, he was awarded the Healey Willan Memorial Scholarship at the University of Toronto before embarking on research at Christ Church, Oxford.

As a trumpet soloist, Jonathan Freeman-Attwood has released fourteen solo albums, the majority of them with Linn, and they have attracted wide critical acclaim for their musical originality and effective re-imagining of the trumpet as a chamber instrument in reconstructions of works from around 1600 to the twentieth century. He is Series Editor for Resonata Music's 'The Re-Imagined Trumpet' in which, amongst other pieces from his catalogue, newly configured sonatas by Schumann, Mendelssohn and Fauré have been published. In 2020, he created with composer Thomas Oehler a Sonata 'after Richard Strauss' for Boosey & Hawkes, recorded for Linn as part of *Richard Strauss and the Viennese Trumpet*, and in

2025 he adapted and recorded the Bach Cello Suites for trumpet for Peters Edition and Deux-Elles respectively.

He has also produced over 250 commercial recordings for many of the world's most prestigious independent labels. His productions have won major awards, including several Diapasons d'Or, Gramophone and BBC Music Awards (including Record of the Year in 2023), and numerous nominations over the last thirty years with artists and ensembles including Rachel Podger, The Cardinall's Musick, Trevor Pinnock, Barbara Hannigan, Kristian Bezuidenhout, Lucy Crowe, Iestyn Davies, Phantasm, La Nuova Musica, I Fagiolini, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Daniel-Ben Pienaar, and various leading cathedral choirs, including St Paul's Cathedral and Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford.

From 1991 to 1995, Jonathan served as Dean of Undergraduate Studies at the Royal Academy of Music, then thirteen years as its Vice-Principal and Director of Studies. In 2001, he was conferred Professor of the University of London and in 2008 was appointed Principal at the Academy. He has played a leading role

in major campaigns to improve the Academy's estate as well as raising over £120m, much of it for scholarships and endowed professorial chairs. He has launched pioneering degree programmes and fostered major international relationships including, in 2021, the Sir Elton John Global Exchange Programme with twelve major international conservatoires. These include the nurturing of a twenty-five-year collaboration with the Juilliard School in New York.

As an educator and scholar Jonathan continues to be active as a lecturer, critic, and contributor to journals (including *Gramophone* since 1992) and publications such as *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (2001, 2nd edition) and *The Cambridge Companion of Recorded Music*, as well as broadcasting regularly on BBC Radio 3. He is an established authority on Bach interpretation.

Jonathan is a trustee of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM), the Countess of Munster Musical Trust, The British Library's SAGA Trust and Garsington Opera (where he is Chair of the Artistic Advisory Committee) and served previously as trustee of the Young Classical Artists Trust (YCAT)



and the University of London. He is also on the Advisory Board of the Academy of Ancient Music, is Patron of London Youth Choirs, holds fellowships at the Royal College of Music, Royal Northern College of Music and King's College London, and was made a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Tokyo University of the Arts in 2017. In 2025, he was appointed as an Honorary Student of Christ Church, Oxford.

He was appointed CBE in the 2018 New Year's Honours List. ■

1	Sarabande from English Suite no. 1 in A major, BWV 806 (<i>transposed to G major</i>)	3:31
2	Prelude and Fugue in D minor, BWV 539	6:37
3	'Praelambulum' from Sonata for violin in E minor, BWV1023 (<i>transposed to B minor</i>)	1:41
4	Toccata in D major, BWV 912	11:50
5	Allemande from Partita no. 5 in G major, BWV 829	2:53
6	Prelude in A minor from Well-Tempered Clavier Book 1, BWV 865 (<i>transposed to B flat minor</i>)	1:15
	Partita in A minor, BWV 1013 (<i>transposed to E minor</i>)	
7	Allemande	2:40
8	Corrente	2:02
9	Sarabande	2:34
10	Bourrée anglaise	1:57
11	Allemande from English Suite no. 1 in A major, BWV 806	5:27
12	Toccata in D minor, BWV 913 (<i>abridged</i>)	7:16
13	Prelude in E major from Well-Tempered Clavier Book 2, BWV 878 (<i>transposed to E flat major</i>)	2:51
14	Telemann: Fantasia no. 1 in A major, TWV 40:2	4:17

Total playing time: 56:51

With thanks to the Royal Academy of Music

Executive Producer Matthew Wadsworth | **Post-production** Julia Thomas | **Recording Producer and Engineer** Philip Hobbs
Cover and booklet design Tim A'Court | **Cover Image** 'Be a Phoenix' (pastel-and-pencil drawing) by John Davies, 1998. By Kind Permission
Recorded in St Peter's Church, Great Haseley, Oxfordshire in October 2025 and March 2026.

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