

Holy Week Organ Recital

Performed by David O'Shea
St Philip's Church, Milltown
7.00 p.m., 31st March 2021 (via Youtube)

Programme

Eleven Chorale Preludes, Op. 122 by Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

(In this performance, each of Brahms's Chorale Preludes will be preceded by a verse of the hymn tune on which it is based.)

1. **Mein Jesu, der du mich** (hymn tune arr. D. M. O'S.)
My Jesus, you call me to eternal joy; you have chosen me.
See how your servant loves to sing the great Bridegroom's praise.
2. **Herzliebster Jesu** (hymn tune arr. J. S. Bach)
O blessed Jesu, how hast thou offended,
that now on thee such judgment has descended?
Of what misdeed hast thou to make confession?
Of what transgression?
3. **O Welt, ich muss dich lassen (first setting)** (hymn tune arr. Heinrich Isaac)
O world, I now must leave you, and go my lonely journey to my eternal home.
I faithfully and humbly commit my soul and body unto the Lord's all-loving hands.
4. **Herzlich tut mich erfreuen** (hymn tune arr. D. M. O'S.)
My faithful heart rejoices; the summer comes at last,
when God, all things reviving, shall bring eternity.
The heaven and earth in splendour will he afresh create,
and all of us, his creatures, shall pure and flawless be.
5. **Schmücke dich, O liebe Seele** (hymn tune arr. J. S. Bach)
Deck thyself, my soul, with gladness,
leave the gloomy haunts of sadness;
come into the daylight's splendour,
there with joy thy praises render
unto him whose grace unbounded
hath this wondrous banquet founded;
high o'er all the heavens he reigneth,
yet to dwell with thee he deigneth.
6. **O wie selig seid ihr doch, ihr Frommen** (hymn tune arr. J. S. Bach)
Blessed are ye, faithful souls departed;
Death awakened you to life immortal.
You are delivered of all cares that hold the world in bondage.

7. **O Gott, du frommer Gott** (hymn tune arr. J. S. Bach)
O God, thou faithful God, thou fountain ever flowing,
without whom nothing is, all perfect gifts bestowing,
a pure and healthy frame O give me, and within
a conscience free from blame, a soul unhurt by sin.

8. **Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen** (hymn tune arr. Michael Praetorius)
Behold, a rose is blooming from out a tender root,
thus in the house of Jesse, as tell our ancient hymns.
A young and tender shoot amid the gloom of winter
burst forth in wondrous bloom.

9. **Herzlich tut mich verlangen (first setting)** (hymn tune arr. J. S. Bach)
My heart is filled with longing to pass away in peace;
for woes are round me thronging, and trials will not cease.
O fain would I be hasting from thee, dark world of gloom,
to gladness everlasting; O Jesus, quickly come!

10. **Herzlich tut mich verlangen (second setting)**

11. **O Welt, ich muss dich lassen (second setting)**

Programme note

During the 1850s, Johannes Brahms took the advice of his friends and mentors Joseph Joachim and Clara Schumann and immersed himself in the study of the compositional techniques of the Baroque period. This period produced a number of Baroque-influenced organ works, which display a mastery of the contrapuntal techniques that Brahms encountered in his study of the music of J. S. Bach and his contemporaries.

Brahms produced only one further organ work in his middle period, until he composed the masterful Chorale Preludes, Op. 122 in the year before his death. These pieces, like his early organ works, show the influence of Baroque techniques, but here these are combined with the harmonic richness and emotional depth that characterize Brahms's mature works.

Eleven preludes were completed, but the set was left incomplete. It is not clear what order Brahms intended the preludes to be performed, and so for this performance I have maintained the traditional publication order. I have preceded each prelude with a harmonization of the chorale tunes that Brahms used as source material, using (where possible) arrangements he would have known.

Brahms was famously indifferent to organized religion, although he had a strong cultural, spiritual and emotional affinity with the musical and literary heritage of Lutheranism. This is most particularly evident in his sensitive and profound setting of passages from Luther's Bible in the German Requiem (first performed in 1868). The Eleven Chorale Preludes, all of which are settings of traditional Lutheran hymns, inhabit the same sound-world as the German Requiem—the sense of poignant serenity that the Germans call *Innigkeit*.

At the twilight of his life, Brahms chose to set chorale tunes that resonated with feelings of grief and resignation, but although these preludes have moments of great darkness and anguish, they are imbued with a sense of hopefulness and peace that looks forward to a life beyond death.

Specification of the organ of St Philip's Church, Milltown

<i>Great</i>	<i>Swell</i>	<i>Pedal</i>
Bourdon 16' *	Open Diapason 8'	Acoustic Bass 32' *
Open Diapason 8'	Hohl Flute 8'	Bourdon 16' *
Stopped Diapason 8'	Salicional 8'	Italian Principal 8'
Viola 8'	Viol Celeste 8'	Bass Flute 8' *
Dolce 8'	Principal 4'	Quint 5 1/3'
Principal 4'	Spitz Flute 4'	Fifteenth 4'
Flute 4'	Fifteenth 2'	Trombone 16'
Twelfth 2 2/3'	Mixture II-III	
Fifteenth 2'	Trumpet 8'	Usual couplers
Tierce 1 3/5'	Oboe 8'	Swell Sub-Octave to Great
Clarinet 8'	Tremulant	
Tremulant		

Tracker action throughout (except on stops marked *, on one unit chest); electric stop-action.

Completed in 2019 by Trevor Crowe Ltd., using new material and pipework recycled from the former organ (Peter Conacher & Co., 1939).

