

Blurb for 10-28-18

News and Notes

This week our music includes Bach's "Toccatina and Fugue in D Minor." We will sing "O for a thousand tongues," "Amazing grace," and Praise, my soul, the King of heaven." The choir will sing the Gospel-style anthem "I Am Alive and I Can See."

Additionally, our Sunday School students will sing "Jesus Loves Me." A video of their performance will be taken to Haiti and shown to the children of Bon Samaritain L'Acuil, who will return a video of themselves singing the song in Creole.

Sunday Bulletins

Today's postlude, Bach's "Toccatina and Fugue in D Minor," is probably the most well-known piece in all of organ literature. This is most likely thanks to the "scary" connotation that has evolved, probably due to many old Hollywood horror films. Bach meant no such thing. It was also one of the pieces used in the Disney classic *Fantasia* in an orchestral version arranged and conducted by Leopold Stokowsky with the help, I think, of Mickey Mouse. We owe having this most famous piece because sometime in the 1730s a student of a student of Bach hand copied the piece (a typical practice at the time) and attributed it to Bach. It did not get published until a hundred years later in 1833 during the Bach revival led by Felix Mendelssohn along with a group of other obscure works (remember there is only one hand-written copy at this point). Mendelssohn performed it in 1840 and then pianists started writing transcriptions, and later came orchestral renditions on its road to fame.

One of Bach's many brilliant attributes was his fusion of multiple styles. In this work he brings together the north German *stylus phantasticus* of Buxtehude and the south German style of Pachelbel. The toccata section consists of free improvisational-sounding flashes of keyboard virtuosity in the north German style. The fugue is more in the more restrained formal south German style. The piece ends with a multi-sectional coda, returning to the north German style.

In 1981, Bach scholar Peter Williams published an article casting doubt on the authenticity of the work and ever since scholars have come up with new theories about the work. Most prevalent is the idea that it is a transcription of a violin fantasy. To be sure, it contains many oddities: for example, the pedal solo in the middle of the fugue, or the final "amen" cadence which never occurs in any other work of Bach. However, to date the Bach Society has never published this as a spurious work and officially maintains its authenticity.