

MUSICAL PRAYER

JOSEPH ADAM

*St. James Cathedral Director of Music & Cathedral Organist*

*Resident Organist, Seattle Symphony*

*Artist in Residence in Organ, University of Washington School of Music*

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*Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr'*, BWV 622

Johann Sebastian Bach  
1685–1750

Bach's years in Weimar (1708–1717) yielded an important collection of pieces in the form of a group of large-scale chorale transcriptions; thirty years later, Bach revisited these pieces, revising and refining them into the collection now known as the *Leipzig Chorales* or *Leipzig Eighteen*. One of three settings of the German chorale version of the Latin *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, this particular setting (*To God on high alone be the glory*) is perhaps Bach's most opulent ornamented chorale. In such a setting, the individual notes of the melody receive elaborate embellishments, over a superbly crafted accompaniment. A highly expressive cadenza brings this setting to a tranquil conclusion.

*Nun freut euch, lieben Christen g'mein*, BWV 734

Bach

The text of this Advent hymn by Martin Luther (*Now rejoice, dear Christians all*) dates to 1524; the melody has also been attributed to Luther. This early work of Bach is unusually virtuosic for a chorale setting. The right hand has *moto perpetuo* figurations in sixteenth notes without ceasing, along with a jagged bass line in eighth notes; in the midst of this, the chorale tune is boldly proclaimed without elaboration. This work has also found a place in the repertoire of virtuoso pianists such as Vladimir Horowitz and the contemporary Icelandic Víkingur Ólafsson in a brilliant and highly effective transcription by Ferruccio Busoni.

*Partita diverse sopra il Corale "Sei gegrüßet, Jesu gütig,"* BWV 768

Bach

The practice of composing variations on a chorale (or hymn tune) was widely cultivated by Lutheran composers in the 17th century. Masters of the genre included three composers – Böhm, Buxtehude, and Pachelbel – whose influence on the formation of Bach's keyboard style was profound. Bach's first biographer, J. N. Forkel, noted that "at Arnstadt between 1703 and 1707, Bach had already begun to write chorales with variations." The finest of these early partitas is without doubt *Sei gegrüßet, Jesu gütig* (*We greet thee, benevolent Jesus*); while in many ways belonging with the other early partitas, this set of twelve variations reflects a compositional development that raises it far above them, and marks an arrival of the mature Bach as a composer.

**JOSEPH ADAM** was first appointed Cathedral Organist at St. James Cathedral in 1993, and was named Director of Music in 2018. There he leads a program that includes three adult choirs and three youth choirs that provides music for nearly 600 services annually, as well as an extensive concert series that presents a wide range of choral and organ programs.

A dedicated educator, for twenty years he taught organ and harpsichord as a faculty member at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma. Continuing this work, he was named Artist in Residence in Organ at the University of Washington in 2019. As Resident Organist of the Seattle Symphony Orchestra since 2003, he has performed regularly in the keyboard section of the orchestra, undertaking organ, harpsichord, piano and celesta parts, as well as annual solo recitals.

His playing received international attention when he was awarded the First Prize in the St. Albans International Organ Competition in 1991, one of the most prestigious organ competitions in the world. His subsequent performances have included recitals in notable venues throughout Europe and America. During the coming year, he will be a part of a series of recitals at St. James Cathedral that will present performances of the complete organ works of Louis Vierne in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the composer's birth. His performances last season included recitals at St. Mark's Cathedral in Seattle, St. Cecilia Cathedral in Omaha, and Stanford University. He also gave performances of the Poulenc Concerto and Respighi Suite for Organ and Strings with the North Carolina Symphony at the new Cathedral of the Holy Name of Jesus in Raleigh.

Joseph Adam was educated at The University of Iowa, the Eastman School of Music, and the University of Washington, and concertizes as a member of the Windwerk Artists cooperative.

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