

# Western Early Keyboard Association Presents

## *JS Bach's Inventions and Sinfonias*

*Barbara Baird, Harpsichord*

**Saturday November 11, 2023, at 2:00PM, Reed College, Portland**  
**YouTube Video Premiere on Saturday, November 25, 2023, at 2:00PM on the**  
**WEKA YouTube Channel: [www.youtube.com/@westernearlykeyboardassoc](http://www.youtube.com/@westernearlykeyboardassoc)**

### PROGRAM

#### **Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)**

##### *Two-Part Inventions*

Invention 1 in C major BWV 772—imitative accompaniment, voices switching roles, echoing

Invention 2 in c minor BWV 773—the most strict canon

Invention 3 in D major BWV 774—starts in canon, dissolves into song form ABA

Invention 4 in d minor BWV 775—starts in canon, but dissolves into free imitation

Invention 5 in Eb major BWV 776—series of repetitions of theme and countertheme

Invention 6 in E major BWV 777—two themes played simultaneously, voices switching; the only  
invention with 2 repeating sections AA BB

Invention 7 in e minor BWV 778—freely imitative counterpoint

Invention 8 in F major BWV 779—imitative canon

Invention 9 in f minor BWV 780—slurs indicating articulation by Bach

Invention 10 in G Major BWV 781—fugal gigue

Invention 11 in g minor BWV 782—2 themes played with free imitative counterpoint

Invention 12 in A Major BWV 783—2 themes played simultaneously, voices switching, echoing

Invention 13 in a minor BWV 784—2 themes played in succession

Invention 14 in Bb Major BWV 785—one main theme fragmented, switching voices, with  
accompaniment

Invention 15 in b minor BWV 786—theme and countertheme with accompaniment

##### *Sinfonias (Three-Part Inventions)*

Sinfonia 3 in D major BWV 789—3-part imitative counterpoint

Sinfonia 5 in Eb major BWV 791—2-part imitative counterpoint with ostinato accompaniment

Sinfonia 11 in G minor BWV 797—3-part imitative counterpoint with accompaniment

Sinfonia 15 in b minor BWV 801—fugal, with moments of accompanied theme

*Following the recital, anyone in the audience who wishes may try the instruments!*

**Dr. Barbara Baird** has been teaching organ, harpsichord, and piano at the University of Oregon since 1987. An active recitalist since 1971, Baird has performed throughout the United States as well as Argentina, Brazil, Europe, and Australia. A frequent adjudicator and clinician, she regularly conducts workshops and master classes for keyboardists, particularly on Baroque and Classical Period Performance, and Keyboard Pedagogy. Baird has been a presenter and recitalist at both national and regional conventions of the American Guild of Organists, and for the Southeastern Historical Keyboard Society, the Western Early Keyboard Association, the Organ Historical Society, the Historical Keyboard Society, the Oregon Bach Festival, several chapters of the American Guild of Organists, and for piano teachers' guilds in the United States and Australia.

Baird currently has four CDs available:

- *Vienna: Two Centuries of Harpsichord Music (1600-1800)*
- *The Organ Mass: Selections from Bach's Klavierübung and Couperin's Convent Mass*
- *Pastorale, Partite, and Preludes at the Point*, works by Johann Sebastian Bach
- *Organ Works for Two*, featuring Julia Brown and Barbara Baird, organ duo

## NOTES

What are Bach's Inventions? J.S. Bach's Inventions were not only intended as instructional keyboard pieces, but also as examples of how to compose. Some thought they were written as exercises for Bach's 9-year-old son, Wilhelm Friedemann Bach.

Bach wrote in the preface to the printed edition of the *Inventions and Sinfonias*: "Sincere instruction by which amateurs of the keyboard—especially those desirous of learning—are shown a clear way not only (1) to learn to play cleanly in two parts, but also, after further progress, (2) to handle three obbligato parts correctly and well; and at the same time, to not only get good *inventiones* of their own, but also to develop them well; above all, however, to achieve a cantabile style in playing and at the same time acquire a strong foretaste of composition."

In his 1802 book, *Johann Sebastian Bach: His Life, Art, and Work*, Johann Nikolaus Forkel writes, "The first thing he did was to teach his pupils his peculiar manner of touching the instrument. For this purpose, he made them practice, for months together, nothing but isolated exercises for all the fingers of both hands, with constant regard to this clear and clean touch. For some months, none could get excused from these exercises; and, according to his firm opinion, they ought to be continued, for from six to twelve months. But if he found that anyone, after some months of practice, began to lose patience, he was so obliging as to write little connected pieces, in which those exercises were combined together. Of this kind are the six little Preludes for Beginners and still more the fifteen two-part Inventions. He wrote both down during the hours of teaching, and, in doing so, attended only to the momentary need of the scholar. But he afterwards transformed them into beautiful, expressive little works of art."

In his 1966 book, *Johann Sebastian Bach: the Culmination of an Era*, Karl Geiringer states, "No other composer had ever considered imbuing clavier compositions of such small dimensions with a content of similar significance. They are studies in independent part writing using all the devices of fugue and canon, double and triple counterpoint, but without strict adherence to any of them."

Although pedagogues disagree on the difficulty of each individual Invention, they probably would all agree that Inventions are not for beginning piano students. The little Preludes for Beginners and the easier dance movements are a much better place to start. When the student has achieved not only sufficient competency in independent playing with each hand, but also the musical maturity for understanding and appreciating the complexity of contrapuntal writing, then undertaking the two-part Inventions makes sense.

So, what is a musical **invention**? Wikipedia states: "In music, an **invention** is a short composition (usually for a keyboard instrument) in two-part counterpoint. ... Inventions are usually not performed in public, but serve as exercises for keyboard students, and as pedagogical exercises for composition students." Hopefully, you will find that these pieces are *not* just exercises, but rather draw from the full range of compositional techniques for writing counterpoint, and are amazing little gems of compositional artistry worthy of public performance.

### UPCOMING WEKA EVENTS - Visit [www.wekaweb.org](http://www.wekaweb.org)

**March 2, 2024 – *The Leonhardt Legacy with Douglas Amrine, Harpsichord***

**April 20, 2024 – *Five Centuries of English Clavichord Music with Marcia Hadjimarkos***

**WEKA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization** and deeply appreciates your memberships and donations to support our early keyboard programs. **Many Thanks to Our 2023-2024 Donors!** *Alan Bostrom, Angeline Case-Stott, David Edwards, C. David Harris, Elizabeth Hays, Jessica Post, Michael Reiter*

### **Portland Baroque Orchestra presents**

**A Musical Offering Bach: Old vs. New - See [www.pbo.org](http://www.pbo.org)**

Nov 11, 7:30pm First Baptist Church - Nov 12, 3pm Reed College Kaul Auditorium

JS Bach: Trio Sonata from *The Musical Offering* - Orchestra Suite in B Minor

CPE Bach: Sinfonia in G Major - JC Bach: Harpsichord Concerto in D Major

***Julian Perkins, the new PBO Artistic Director and an internationally known early keyboardist from England, performs the harpsichord concerto, which includes variations on "God Save the King."***