



Flanders Recorder Quartet  
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<b>Bach</b>
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*cd Aeolus AE-10136, 2005*

**Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)** is without a doubt the greatest musical genius that Western culture has produced. A vast literature has arisen praising this great master, and the recordings of his work are both numerous and diverse. However, a CD on which Bach's genius in all its diversity is presented by a recorder ensemble is an absolute first. Arrangements of beautifully expressive chorales, lively Italianate concerti, highly inventive preludes and fugues, and a monumental passacaglia are all heard here in arrangements for four recorders.

**J.S. Bach** composed very little for the recorder. This is the only error that we, as recorder fanatics, can impute to this genius of a composer. He did in fact include recorder parts in some twenty of his cantatas, as well as the *St Matthew Passion*, two of the *Brandenburg Concerti* and the *Magnificat*. I find his *Actus Tragicus* "*Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit*", especially moving in its beauty, with its unusual combination of two recorders, two viols, solo voices and continuo.

On the other hand, **Bach** showed a great predilection for the organ, the king of instruments. He walked some 300 kilometres in order to meet his mentor and source of inspiration, the German organist Dietrich Buxtehude. It should thus come as no surprise to discover that many works on this CD were originally written for organ. Although a recorder consort can be said to approach the sound of an organ, it is impossible to imitate the grandeur of this instrument with four recorders. What the version for four recorders does offer is a certain charm and transparency: each voice wins a degree of individuality and independence. Four personalities, four individuals melt together, as it were, into one player.

**Bach's** music is perfect and unsurpassed. The organ virtuoso Reincken was very pleased when late in his life he met Bach: "I thought that the art of the fugue and of improvisation had died out, but I see that they live on in you". Such a sentiment reveals the great admiration, appreciation and recognition acknowledged by a true connoisseur. And yet Bach's music was greeted less enthusiastically by a number of his contemporaries. For many, his compositions came across as volcanic outbursts of dissonance and chromaticism, with outrageous bass notes and rapid-fire rhythms. His improvisations were found to be wild, overly-audacious and full of harmonic puzzles with (over-)extended modulations. In an organ competition in Hamburg, Bach could do no better than third place, after Telemann and Graupner. The first Bach biography appeared some one hundred years after his death. Unbelievable!

**J.S. Bach** represents the highpoint of a contrapuntal tradition. Almost all of Bach's compositions tend to the fugal; he seems to make a fugue of every composition, whether it be an unpretentious dance or a stately and grand chorale. The climax of this approach is without a doubt *Die Kunst der Fuge*, Bach's final work, which reveals the composer as a masterful

architect of musical construction based on four perfect and equal voices, and as an inventive painter who is able to explore the whole palette of colours using just one theme.

**Flanders Recorder Quartet** has a boundless admiration for J.S. Bach. We waited for fifteen years before we dared to record his compositions and to publish our arrangements of them. But now we feel that the material has matured sufficiently to allow a recording and a published edition to stand the test. Would Bach himself have approved? It is a fact that the master himself was fond of reworking compositions which interested him. For the rest, this question must remain unanswered. We ourselves find his music to be so rich and full of genius, so perfect in structure, that the actual scoring is of less importance. Bach's language is the perfect reflection of the genius from which it sprang: vital, balanced, energetic, driving, poetic, religious, inventive, rhetorical, emotional, introverted, symbolic, personal...

<b>Concerto in a - BWV 596</b> After Vivaldi op 3 nr 11 (RV 565) allegro-grave-fuga-largo-allegro	<b>J.S.Bach</b>
<b>Fantasia &amp; Fuga in C – BWV 570 &amp; 545</b>	<b>J.S.Bach</b>
<b>Passacaglia in g - BWV 582</b>	<b>J.S.Bach</b>
<b>Concerto in F - BWV 595</b>	<b>J.S.Bach</b>
<b>The art of fuge - BWV 1080</b> Contrapunctus 1 Contrapunctus 3 Contrapunctus 9	<b>J.S.Bach</b>
<b>Praeludium &amp; Fuga in c - BWV 537</b>	<b>J.S. Bach</b>
<b>Concerto in d</b> After Vivaldi op. 3 no.8 allegro-larghetto-allegro	<b>J.S. Bach</b>
<b>Op de fles (2002)</b> (°1936)	<b>F. Geysen</b>

*“combining the breathy timbre of a portative organ with the expressive interplay of a fine string quartet “ (NY Times, 2006)*