

# Mp3 Arlan Wareham - Big Bach Bash



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Do you love big Bach organ pieces? Then this is the album for you. From the lilting 9/8 Prelude, to the introspective c-minor Prelude and Fugue, it's all here. 8 MP3 Songs CLASSICAL: Bach, CLASSICAL: Organ Show all album songs: Big Bach Bash Songs Details: THE MUSIC I have always loved Johann Sebastian Bach's big organ works! Of course, I also enjoy many of his beautiful chorale preludes and his trio sonatas, but there's something especially wonderful about his major works, his toccatas, preludes, and fugues. So, when I put this album together, I completely indulged this passion. Some of the pieces on here are ones that I learned to play myself when I was in college. Others are ones that I always admired and loved but never got around to learning to play. I start the album off with the Dorian Toccata. This is one that I learned to play and even memorized at one time. It's not as well known or as flashy as the famous D-minor Toccata and Fugue (of Disney fame), but can certainly hold its own. It has a unity of purpose that keeps the listener's attention. The Fugue in c minor, which is the second track, is not played very often. I think I included it mostly because of the subject of the fugue. This is one that I never learned to play, either, but somehow its subject fascinated me. For the third track, the mood changes. The 9/8 Prelude is called that because it is written in 9/8 time. What this means is that each measure of music consists of three groups of three beats each. Bach uses two main themes in this work: an ascending figure of stepwise triplets, and a contrasting figure of large downward leaps. These two play off of each other, until one finally wins, at the very end. This is another piece that I never learned to play. The fourth and fifth tracks are a prelude and fugue that definitely go together. Not only are they in the same key (c minor), but they exude the same mood. I learned to play both of these in college, and I remember at the time that my teacher, Don Vaughn, told me that one of the television stations played this music while they were showing scenes of the 1972 Sylmar earthquake, one of the largest tremors to hit Southern California

in my lifetime. The music of this pair is certainly contemplative. I'm sure you'll enjoy these two works, even though they are not as well known as others of Bach's organ pieces. For the sixth track, I chose the "Wedge" Fugue. This fugue (in e minor) is so named because its subject is like a wedge, with the alternating notes moving further and further apart. The fugue is VERY chromatic, which means that it uses many notes outside the key it is written in. In several places, Bach is pushing the limits of tonality almost as far as some of the composers of the last Romantic period, about 150 years later! This is also a work that I admired from a distance but never learned. I wrap up the album with the "St. Anne" Prelude and Fugue (in Eb Major). Bach wrote these as a sort of "frame" for his Orgelbuchlein, a set of chorale preludes connected with the Lutheran catechism. There is no denying the Trinitarian aspect of these, especially the fugue, which is a triple fugue with sharply contrasting subjects. The first subject is grand and stately. Since it is also the first phrase of a well-known English hymn tune, St. Anne ("O God, Our Help in Ages Past"), this is where the fugue gets its nickname, although most scholars believe that Bach never heard this hymn tune. The second subject consists of rapid, constantly moving notes with a hovering feel. The third subject is bold and assertive. The real magic comes, though, when Bach puts them together, bringing the whole fugue to a glorious end. Unfortunately, I never had the opportunity to learn this pair, either. ABOUT THE ORGANIST I began piano lessons before I started school, so I literally learned to read music before I learned to read! My first piano teacher, Mrs Rittenhouse, taught me to love music. When she had to retire, I studied with Mrs Hempel, who taught me how to go beyond just the written notes. My third piano teacher, Mr Hicks, who was also my first organ teacher, introduced me to the joys and the rigor of classical music. All of my teachers gave me a good foundation in musical theory, as well, which I really learned with gusto. In college, I couldn't decide whether to major in math or in music, so I did both! The music major was by far the more demanding of the two, requiring more units and occupying much more of my time, but I thoroughly enjoyed it. Here, I expanded my knowledge of music theory, composition. history, and, of course, performance. Besides improving my playing skills, my organ teacher, Donald Vaughn, taught me an immense amount about the history and design of this unique and powerful instrument. I also learned a great deal from my composition teacher, the late Perry Beach. In graduate school, I studied math, and my career has been based on that. However, in recent years, my interest in the organ and in musical compositions has been rekindled. And advances in technology have allowed me to bring you this music, recordings of real pipe organs meticulously and carefully crafted from

my own home studio in Tsfat, Israel. I hope that you enjoy this music as much as I enjoyed making it!

**ABOUT THE INSTRUMENT** The organ that I used in these recordings was completed in 2001 in the town of Litomysl, in the Czech Republic, by Vladimir Grygar. However, this instrument is actually ideal for Bach. This is a largely Baroque-style organ, with 51 bright and crisp stops arrayed over four manual divisions and the pedal division. The acoustics of the room it is in are also great for bringing out the grandeur of this music.

**HOW THIS MUSIC WAS MADE** If you've read this far, congratulations! If you've REALLY been paying attention, you may well be wondering exactly how I made this music. The process begins with someone (not me!) meticulously recording each pipe of the organ, individually. This means literally thousands of recordings for only one organ! The organ used on this album was recorded by Sonus Paradisi. I bought these samples from them. But this alone is not enough. Each pipe makes a particular sound when the air first enters it (when one first presses the key on the keyboard) and another unique sound when the air is cut off (when one releases the key). During the time in between, the sound is quite steady, so the sample can be looped to allow the note to be played as long or as short as desired. Also, a way is needed to select the various pipes in a manner similar to the way a live organist sitting at the organ console does, that is, by selecting the stops desired and pressing the keys. All of this is handled by a program running on my Windows PC called Hauptwerk, from Crumhorn Labs. In other words, Hauptwerk provides the front end to play the organ samples. By the way, the word "Hauptwerk" is German for "high work" and is generally the name of the main manual division on a German organ (whose pipes are mounted immediately in front of but high above the organ console in a traditional organ). In English, this manual division is usually called the "Great". This still leaves the question of how to play the organ. Here's where something called MIDI ("Musical Instruments Digital Interface") comes in. This is a protocol that was developed more than 20 years ago to allow electronic musical instruments to communicate with each other. This is used, for example, to let a musician control a wide assortment of synthesizers, sampled sounds, drum machines, and even lighting controls from a single keyboard or other electronic instruments, such as an electric guitar. So, one way to play these organs is to have an organ console that is equipped with MIDI. This is NOT how I do it, however! Instead, I have another program, Digital Performer, which is a sequencing program, that runs on my Macintosh. This program sends the MIDI messages to Hauptwerk (on the other computer) via MIDI cables, and this is what actually "plays" the organ. Of course, Digital Performer allows me to determine exactly which notes on which

manual or pedal will be played, when they will begin, and when they will end. It also allows me to set when the stops will change. With Hauptwerk, I pre-set which combinations of stops to use, and Digital Performer merely sends Hauptwerk a signal telling it to move to the next (or the previous) combination. Luckily, Digital Performer has a pretty good user interface, including some musical notation, so this process is not as hard as you might think. I do have an electronic keyboard, also connected to the computers by MIDI, and usually use it to enter the notes. I don't have to enter every single note this way, however. In fact, copy and paste come in VERY handy here! The sounds of the organ come out of the PC sound system, either through the speakers or through the earphones, depending on which I plug in. But, when I want to record, Hauptwerk can also send the sound to a WAV file (the standard musical file on a regular music CD) in addition. This means that only the organ sound gets into the file (on my PC hard disk). I don't have to worry about ambient sounds, such as someone slamming a door, or the A/C fan, or a mooing cow (yes, we do sometimes have cows near our house here!), or a big construction track vehicle rumbling by (which also happens here!). Of course, the main challenge for me in all of this is to make the music SOUND as though a live organist were playing it. The organist is basically note perfect, since I DON'T see any reason to DELIBERATELY enter wrong notes! But I DO pay considerable attention to the lengths of notes, especially repeated notes, and to making subtle variations in tempo, as I would certainly do if playing the music live. As for results, I'll leave you to judge, but I think you'll be amazed at how realistic it sounds! I must say, it's quite a thrill for me!

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