

## Organ Music Notes for February 17th

**Prelude:** J.S. Bach: Chorale Prelude: *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan* BWV 1116

**Postlude:** J.S. Bach: Toccata in C BWV 564

J.S. Bach wrote a wealth of church music, but contrary to what many people think, much of his organ music is actually secular. While it would have been played at the church, since the organ was located there, his dozens of toccatas, fantasias, and preludes with fugues would have been performed in recitals rather than during the course of worship. However, many of Bach's organ works are based on Lutheran chorales and were used then much as they often are now, as preludes and postludes or music for the offertory or communion.

This Sunday, I am playing one piece from both the sacred and secular sides. The prelude *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan* (which translates to "What God does, is done well") comes from the Neumeister collection of Bach's earliest works which sat unpublished in various libraries until 1985 when Bach scholar Christoph Wolff discovered them in the archives at Yale and had them published. The chorale tune is from the 17th century and, like many modern hymn tunes, was given several different texts in various hymnals.

The Toccata in C is a more mature work and is the first section of a larger piece consisting of the Toccata, Adagio, and a Fugue, a precursor of the three movement classical sonata form. The word *toccata* comes from the Latin *toccare* meaning "to touch" and is used exclusively for virtuosic keyboard works that are designed to show off the talents of the player. Bach was not only one of the foremost composers of the baroque period and of all time, but he was renowned throughout Europe as the leading organist of the day. When he entered an organ competition, frequently the other players would withdraw! While I will never pretend to be an organist of Bach's caliber, taking on his great works is always an honor.

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