

INTRODUCTION

Sometime in the mid-1990s I was asked to contribute lyre music at a conference held in Emerson College, Sussex, with the theme Cosmic Music. I contacted a few friends all of whom were very able lyre players and we performed the *Nine Canons* that run like a red thread through the *Goldberg Variations*. This was the beginning of the lyre ensemble called *Naked Piano* which went on to perform a wide variety of music, both contemporary and classical, for several years after this.

Printed in Bach's lifetime as the final part of his *Clavier-Übung* series, the *Aria mit verschiedenen Veraenderungen* or *Goldberg Variations* as they came to be known were not always as popular as they are nowadays. Although the *Goldberg Variations* had been recorded before, both on harpsichord as well as piano, it was Glen Gould's first recording in 1956 which brought the music to the attention of a wider public and helped it to be gradually seen as part of the standard keyboard repertoire.

In spite of my very modest keyboard ability I had a very deep interest in Bach's music and for many years had explored it not only on piano but also on lyre with other friends and colleagues. I found myself particularly drawn to the *Goldberg Variations* by the (now widely discounted) story about their origin, related by Nikolaus Forkel (1749 – 1818) in his seminal work on the life of Johann Sebastian Bach published in 1802. He describes how they were commissioned by Count Hermann Carl von Keyserling who was the former Russian Ambassador to the court in Dresden and who had a very young protégé, Johann Gottlieb Goldberg (1727 – 1726), who had been a pupil of Bach. The Count was frequently ill and had many sleepless nights:

“Goldberg, who was living in his house, was obliged to pass the night in the next room at such times and to play something to the Count during his insomnia. Once the Count mentioned to Bach that he would like to have some keyboard pieces for Goldberg of a **delicate and lively character** such as might cheer him up during his sleepless nights.”

Perhaps this description of the music as having a “delicate and lively character” piqued my interest since this description could equally be a characterization of the tone and timbre of the modern lyre. Perhaps I was also intrigued that one member of the same Keyserling/Keyserlingk family had been involved with Bach, and another member, hundreds of years later, in 1924, with the inauguration of a new organic approach to agriculture proposed by Rudolf Steiner.

It also has to be said that, as a music therapist, I had a professional interest. Was Bach trying to create a composition for the Count that could alleviate his insomnia therapeutically? At the hand of the lovely song by Henry Purcell *An Evening Hymn* I was well aware of the belief current in that time, that during sleep, as the body lay in the bed, the soul would repose in the arms of God. Were these variations, with their nine canons, a musical journey through the heavens of Dante, a substitute for the nightly heavenly journey the insomniac Count could not make? Moreover, was the structure of the 32 movements of the *Goldberg Variations* perhaps inspired by Dante's *Paradiso* with its 33 chapters? Was there a hidden 33rd variation? These and many other questions, led me to give a series of three lectures about the *Goldberg Variations*.

No manuscript holograph copy of the *Goldberg Variations* has ever been found but in 1974 Bach's own printed copy came to light in Strasbourg. In it, on a blank page at the end of the copy he had added 14 short perpetual motion puzzle canons based on the first eight notes of the ground of the Aria.

It is widely thought that these fourteen canons, found at the end of Bach's own printed exemplar, represent a signature to this final part of the *Clavier-Übung*, in cabbalistic number-letter substitution with the letters B-A-C-H = $(2+1+3+8) = 14$.

The second part of this edition has a performing score in six parts with the solutions to the canons divided into four movements. Metronome marks are suggestions only.

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Monassa
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Nine Canons From The Goldberg Variations

1 Variatio 3 Canone all' Unisono

I

Sop. Lyre

Sop. Lyre

Alt. Ten. Bass. Lyre

The first system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top two staves are labeled 'Sop. Lyre' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Alt. Ten. Bass. Lyre'. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 12/8. The music begins with a treble clef on the top staff, followed by a bass clef on the middle and bottom staves. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

3

The second system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top two staves are in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 12/8. The music continues with various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

5

The third system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top two staves are in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 12/8. The music continues with various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

7

The fourth system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top two staves are in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 12/8. The music continues with various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The system concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Variatio 6 Canone alla Seconda

1

Sop. Lyre

Sop. Lyre

Alt. Ten. Bass. Lyre

5

10

15

1.

2.

III

Variatio 9 Canone alla Terza

1

Sop. Lyre

Sop. Lyre

Alt. Ten. Bass. Lyre

3

5

7

Variatio 12 Canone alla quarta

IV

1

Sop. Lyre

Alt. Lyre

Alt. Ten.
Bass. Lyre

5

9

13

* Note the clef change

BWV 1087

FOURTEEN CANONS

on the first eight notes of the ground of the
Aria from the "Goldberg Variations"

Arranged for Lyres or other
instruments J. S. Clark

I

Johann Sebastian Bach

♩ = 60 1

Soprano & Solo Lyres 1

Solo Lyres 2

Soprano Small Soprano Solo Lyres 3

Easy Lyre 4

Easy Alto Lyre 5

Alto Lyre 6

2

1

2

3

4

5

6

II

1 $\text{♩} = 44$ 6

7

13 7