



Bach: Life and Death

April 2026

Orgelbüchlein Organ Project for Young Organists

Application Pack

Duncan Fraser / Dr Anna Steppler / William Whitehead

1 Introduction and Background

Bedford Music Club promotes interesting themed festivals (2024 Bella Ciao! an exploration of Italian culture, Brahms at the Red Hedgehog (his Hungarian influences) and recently Black Voices a positive celebration at the end of Black History month). <https://www.bedfordmusicclub.com/>

Bach: Life and Death

In April 2026 we will be celebrating Bach, both some of the music he wrote in 1726 (the cantatas BWV 35 and BWV 170) and looking especially at the theme of mortality. Bach lived in a time of 25-30% infant mortality. He himself was orphaned (his mother died when he was 9, his father when he was 10) and he came from a large family of musicians, many of whom died young and many of his children died before they were 21 so it is unsurprising that death, dying, grief and mourning provide some of his most powerful and poignant music.

We aim to explore more contemporary and humanist approaches too. There are a range of concerts exploring these themes.

2 Orgelbüchlein- the Bedford Little Organ Book

We want to celebrate the centrality of the organ to Bach's work, not least as many of his chorale preludes explore these themes so well.

We want to provide the opportunity for outstanding young organists to take part in a study day led by Dr Anna Stepler (Merton College Oxford, see below) (April 8th) and to give mini-recitals (April 11th) on four different organs in Bedford. (See organ specifications below). There will be four mini recitals on the concert day - like a mini Bach pilgrimage.

3 Your involvement

We are looking to select young organists (under 23) to be part of this exciting project and would love you to apply.

We would ask you to submit two possible programmes (one for one of the larger organs and one for the smaller - see below) which must:

- explore the themes of death, mortality, grieving
- be maximum 30'
- contain two Bach chorale preludes from the Orgelbüchlein
- contain one or more pieces from the Orgelbüchlein Project (curated by William Whitehead, see <https://orgelbuechlein.co.uk/> for details) and/or by other contemporary composers (we encourage you to think diversely, and would welcome the inclusion of music by women and composers of colour): see repertoire below for suggestions.
- the programme could also include a short improvised chorale prelude
- please see organ specifications below to inform your choice

4 Timetable

Wednesday April 8th 10 - 4 pm

Masterclasses with Dr Anna Steppler. In the four churches (see below)

7.30 pm

Recital by Dr Steppler on the themes of the Festival. (venue tbc)

Saturday April 11th

10.45 - 11.15	All Saints
12.00 - 1.00	St Paul's (part of its regular monthly organ recital series)
1 - 1.30	lunch
1.45 - 2.15	Bunyan Meeting
3.00 - 3.30	Holy Child and St Joseph

5 Application Process

Please send your completed application (see separate form) by email to duncan@duncanfrasercoach.com no later than **Friday Jan 30th 2026**

Duncan Fraser, (Festival Curator), Anna Steppler, Artistic Adviser) and William Whitehead (Orgelbüchlein Project) will select organists and **successful candidates will be informed by Friday 13th Feb**

The Orgelbüchlein Project, (Bach Footsteps Fund) has generously supported travel expenses for participants.

The project is also offering a discount code for those who wish to purchase volumes of the Orgelbüchlein Project. That could include participants or any other interested parties.

5 The team

Duncan Fraser, Curator Bedford Music Club.

Duncan is a composer, <https://duncanfrasercomposer.com/about/> festival curator (and former organist) and executive coach. He was Artistic Director of the RLPS, The Liverpool Cathedral Centenary and has broadcast on BBC Radio 3. He is also founding director of Bedford Sings.

Dr Anna Steppler, Artistic Adviser and mentor.

Anna is assistant organist at Merton College, Oxford, having been a postdoctoral Research Fellow in Music at Peterhouse, Cambridge. She received her Ph.D. in Musicology from Cornell University 'Michael Praetorius, the Organ, and the Possibilities of Instrumental Music', She read Music at Merton College, Oxford, where she was organ scholar from 2010-2013, and has a Masters degree on the Organ from Göteborgs Universitet, Sweden, where she was awarded the Carl Larsson Scholarship for Music.

She is an active recitalist and organist, and deeply committed to expanding the organ's repertory to include under-represented voices.

William Whitehead, Orgelbüchlein Project

William studied at Oxford and Cambridge and won first prize at the Odense International organ competition in Denmark, 2004. He is an international recital organist, teacher and recording artist.

He is a continuo player (Gabrieli Consort, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra). He was Assistant Organist at Rochester Cathedral, and Director of Music at St Mary's Bourne Street, and is now the Associate Organist of Lincoln's Inn in London. He has been a professor at the Royal Academy of Music and Trinity Laban.

William is curator of the Orgelbüchlein project, a large-scale project to 'complete' Bach's unfinished manuscript collection. www.orgelbuechlein.co.uk.

6 Repertoire

Bach - The Orgelbüchlein (Little Organ Book), BWV 599–644

(titles are the first lines of the chorales; English translations in parentheses)

BWV 599	Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland (Come now, Savior of the heathen)
BWV 600	Gott durch deine Güte (God, through Thy goodness)
BWV 601	Herr Christ, der einig Gotts Sohn (Lord Christ, the only Son of God)
BWV 602	Lob sei dem allmächtigen Gott (Praise be to almighty God)
BWV 603	Puer natus in Bethlehem (A boy is born in Bethlehem)
BWV 604	Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ (Praise be to You, Jesus Christ)
BWV 605	Der Tag, der ist so freudenreich (O day full of joy)
BWV 606	Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her (From Heaven above to earth I come)
BWV 607	Vom Himmel kam der Engel Schar (From Heaven came a host of angels)
BWV 608	In dulci jubilo (In sweet rejoicing)
BWV 609	Lobt Gott, ihr Christen, allzugleich (Praise God, you Christians, all together)
BWV 610	Jesu, meine Freude (Jesus, my joy)
BWV 611	Christum wir sollen loben schon (We should now praise Christ)
BWV 612	Wir Christenleut (We Christian people)
BWV 613	Helft mir Gottes Güte preisen (Help me to praise God's goodness)
BWV 614	Das alte Jahr vergangen ist (The old year has passed away)
BWV 615	In dir ist Freude (In Thee is joy)
BWV 616	Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin (With peace and joy I depart)
BWV 617	Herr Gott, nun schleuss den Himmel auf (Lord God, now open wide heaven's door)
BWV 618	O Lamm Gottes, unschuldig (O Lamb of God, innocent)
BWV 619	Christe, du Lamm Gottes (Christ, Thou Lamb of God)
BWV 620	Christ lag in Todesbanden (Christ lay in death's bonds)
BWV 621	Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, der den Tod überwand (Jesus Christ, our Savior, who conquered death)
BWV 622	O Mensch, beweine dein Sünde gross (O man, bewail thy great sin)
BWV 623	Wir danken dir, Herr Jesu Christ (We thank Thee, Lord Jesus Christ)
BWV 624	Hilf Gott, dass mir's gelinge (Help me, God, that it succeed)
BWV 625	Christ ist erstanden (Christ is risen)
BWV 626	Erstanden ist der heilige Christ (The holy Christ is risen)

BWV 627	Erschienen ist der herrlich Tag (Appeared has the glorious day)
BWV 628	Komm, Gott Schöpfer, heiliger Geist (Come, God Creator, Holy Spirit)
BWV 629	Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend (Lord Jesus Christ, turn to us)
BWV 630	Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier (Dearest Jesus, we are here)
BWV 631	Heiliger Geist, du Tröster mein (Holy Spirit, my comforter)
BWV 632	Herr Gott, Vater in Ewigkeit (Lord God, Father in eternity)
BWV 633	Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr (Glory to God alone on high)
BWV 634	Dies sind die heiligen zehn Gebot (These are the holy Ten Commandments)
BWV 635	Mensch, willst du leben seliglich (Man, if you want to live blessedly)
BWV 636	Dies sind die heiligen zehn Gebot (variant)
BWV 637	Vater unser im Himmelreich (Our Father in heaven)
BWV 638	Durch Adams Fall ist ganz verderbt (Through Adam's fall is all corrupt)
BWV 639	Es ist das Heil uns kommen her (Salvation has come to us)
BWV 640	Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ (I call to You, Lord Jesus Christ)
BWV 641	In dich hab ich gehoffet, Herr (In You have I trusted, Lord)
BWV 642	Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein (When we are in utmost need)
BWV 643	Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten (Who lets only the dear God reign)
BWV 644	Alle Menschen müssen sterben (All men must die) (+ One fragment of a chorale prelude, left incomplete)

Orgelbüchlein Additional Repertoire

The Orgelbüchlein Project is pleased to offer a discount code for anyone who wishes to purchase one or more of the volumes. <https://orgelbuechlein.co.uk/all-chorales> the code for a 15% discount is BMC2026 and is valid from now until 30 April 2026.

Imogen Morgan	Schmücke dich
Joanna Marsh	Mensch willst du leben seliglich (available in Volume 3)
Elena Langer	O Traurigkeit (available in Volume 1)
Peter Planyavsky	Nun gibt mein Jesus gute Nacht
Jacques van Oortmerssen	Nun ruhen alle Wälder
Sophie Viney	Es stehn vor Gottes Throne
Undine Smith Moore	Variations on There is a fountain filled with blood
Evelyn Simpson-Curenton	Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Ethel Smythe	1. Du, O schönes Weltgebäude, (Thou O fair and wondrous earth)
2a	O Gott du frommer Gott (O God, you righteous God)
2b.	Canon on O Gott du frommer Gott
3.	Schwing dich auf zu deinem Gott, (Raise yourself up to your God)
4.	Erschienen ist der herrlich Tag, (Appeared is the glorious day)
5.	Prelude & Fugue on O Traurigkeit, O Herzeleid, (O darkest woe, O heart's pain)

7 The Organs

7.1 All Saints

Norman & Beard 1910, Keith Bance (rebuild) 1979

Swell:

1	Spitz Flute	8
2	Viola	8
3	Celeste	8
4	Gemshorn	4
5	Block Flute	2
6	Scharf	II
7	Trumpet	8

Great:

8	Open Diapason	8
9	Rohr Flute	8
10	Dulciana	8
11	Principal	4
12	Octave	2
13	Quint	2 2/3

Swell to Great

Pedal:

14	Sub Bass	16
15	Octave	8
16	Bass Flute	8
17	Choral Bass	4
18	Fagot	16

Great to Pedal

Swell to Great

Swell to Pedal

7.2 St Paul's <https://npor.org.uk/survey/R01942>

Builder Charles James Organs, 2009/10
rebuild and remodelling of Hill, Norman & Beard organ; virtually a new organ using existing pipe work; pedal derived from 4 extended ranks; new soundboards (P&S Organ Supply); new wind system & electrical transmission;
Great moved to speak into Nave; Swell shutters facing South & West;

Pedal - Compass-low C Compass-high g1 Keys 32

1	Resultant Bass	32	12 pipes
2	Open Wood	16	
3	Open Diapason	16	A
4	Bourdon	16	B
5	Echo Bourdon	16	from Swell
6	Principal	8	A
7	Bass Flute	8	B
8	Fifteenth	4	A
9	Trombone	16	C
10	Trumpet	8	C

Choir - Compass-low C Compass-high c4 Keys 61

11	Open Diapason	8	
12	Stopped Diapason	8	
13	Dulciana	8	
14	Principal	4	
15	Lieblich Flute	4	
16	Nazard	2 2/3	
17	Gemshorn	2	
18	Tierce	1 3/5	
19	Mixture	III	15.19.22
20	Clarinet	8	
21	Tremulant		
22	Tuba	8	High Pressure

Great - Compass-low C Compass-high c4 Keys 61

23	Double Open Diapason	16	
24	Open Diapason No.1	8	
25	Open Diapason No.2	8	
26	Claribel Flute	8	
27	Principal	4	
28	Harmonic Flute	4	
29	Twelfth	2 2/3	
30	Fifteenth	2	
31	Mixture	IV	19.22.26.29
32	Trumpet	8	

Swell - Compass-low C Compass-high c4 Keys 61 Enclosed

33	Lieblich Bourdon	16	
34	Open Diapason	8	
35	Rohr Flute	8	
36	Salicional	8	

37	Vox Angelica	8	TC
38	Principal	4	
39	Suabe Flute	4	
40	Fifteenth	2	
41	Mixture	III	17.19.22
42	Oboe	8	
43	Tremulant		
44	Double Trumpet	16	
45	Horn	8	
46	Clarion	4	

Console - Console type Detached Stop type Drawstop Pedalboard Radiating Concave Couplers

Swell to Pedal
Swell to Great
Swell to Choir
Swell octave
Swell suboctave
Choir to Great
Choir to Pedal
Choir octave
Choir suboctave
Great to Pedal

Details - Blowing Electric

Accessories

8 adjustable thumb pistons for Great
8 adjustable thumb pistons for Swell
8 adjustable thumb pistons for Choir
8 adjustable toe pistons for Pedal
8 adjustable thumb pistons for Generals
8 adjustable toe pistons for Swell/Generals (Duplicating)
(1-4 right of Sw divs/5-8 right of Gt divs);
reversible pistons in Great Key-slip - Ch-Gt, Sw-Gt, Gt-Pd, Trombone
reversible pistons in Choir Key-slip - Sw-Ch, Ch-Pd, Tuba
reversible piston in Swell Key-slip - Sw-Pd
Swell Reeds on Pedal
Generals on Swell Toe Pistons
Great and Pedal Combinations Coupled
Swell and Pedal Combinations Coupled
Balanced swell pedal
16 levels of memory for the divisional pistons
96 levels of memory for the general pistons

7.3 Bunyan Meeting

Builders 2001, Norman Hall and Sons, Cambridge, 2001, overhauled; tonal additions and changes/ extensions;
1991, Kenneth H. Breedon, tonal changes/extensions;
1974, Roy Bullivant

Key action EP Stop action EP Compass-low C Compass-high f1 Keys 30

Pedal

1	Open Diapason	16
2	Bourdon	16
3	Principal	8
4	Bass Flute	8
5	Fifteenth	4
6	Choral Bass	4
7	Double Trumpet	16
8	Trumpet	8

Choir - Key action EP Stop action EP Compass-low C Compass-high g3 Keys 56

9	Viole d'Orchestre	8
10	Lieblich Gedact	8
11	Flauto Traverso	4
12	Flageolet	2
13	Larigot	1 1/3
14	Clarinet	8
15	Tromba	8

Great Key action EP Stop action EP Compass-low C Compass-high g3 Keys 56

16	Open Diapason	8
17	Violin Diapason	8
18	Stopped Diapason	8
19	Bell Gamba	8
20	Principal	4
21	Harmonic Flute	4
22	Twelfth	2 2/3
23	Fifteenth	2
24	Tierce	1 3/5
25	Mixture	III
26	Trumpet	8
27	Clarion	4

Swell Key action EP Stop action EP Compass-low C Compass-high g3 Keys 56 Enclosed

28	Bourdon	16
29	Open Diapason	8
30	Rohr Flute	8
31	Salicional	8
32	Vox Angelica	8
33	Principal	4
34	Flute	4
35	Piccolo	2

36	Mixture	III
37	Oboe	8
38	Cornopean	8
39	Tremulant	

Console

Console type Detached Stop type Drawstop Label font Block Pedalboard Radiating
 Concave Angled jambs; console at front left hand side on ground level;
 Couplers
 Swell to Pedal
 Swell to Great
 Swell to Choir
 Swell octave to Great
 Swell suboctave to Great
 Swell octave
 Swell suboctave
 Choir to Great
 Choir to Pedal
 Great to Pedal
 Swell Octave to Pedal

Details Blowing Electric - Discus

Accessories

4 thumb pistons to Great
 3 thumb pistons to Swell
 3 thumb pistons to Choir
 7 toe pistons
 balanced swell pedal
 Great and Pedal pistons coupled

7.4 Holy Child & St Jospeh <https://www.stjosephsbedford.org/>

Builders Robert Shaftoe, Pavenham 1984

Great

1	Stopped Diapason	8
2	Stopped Diapason	8
3	Principal	4
4	Twelfth	22/3
5	Fifteenth	2

Swell

6	Redact	8
7	Chimney flute	4
8	Flageolet	2

Pedal

9	Bourdon	16
---	---------	----

Man II (swell) to ped

Man I (great) to Ped

No swell pedal

8 Other artists in the festival to include:

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment

Helen Charlston Mezzo

Ashley Soloman Flute

Bojan Cicic Violin

Sarah McMahon 'cello

Alise Silent Accordion

Anna Steppler Organ

RCM student ensemble

LCDS choreographers and dancers

Bach and Mortality Study Day

Duncan Fraser

14/11/25