

2026  
**YORK**  
EARLY  
MUSIC  
FESTIVAL

**Steven Devine**

*Preludes, Fugues and Fantasies*

**All Saints' Church, North Street**

**Wednesday 8 July 12.30pm**

## **Steven Devine** *clavichord*

### *Preludes, Fugues and Fantasies*

Prelude and Fugue in C major, BWV 846      **Johann Sebastian Bach** 1685-1750  
*from The Well-tempered Clavier Book I*

Prelude through all the Major Keys, op. 39 no. 1      **Ludwig Van Beethoven**  
1770-1827

Fantasia in C, F.15      **Wilhelm Friedemann Bach** 1710-84

Fantasia & Fugue      **Johann Ludwig Krebs** 1713-80  
*from Partita in A minor, KrebsWV 825*

Prelude through all the Major Keys, op. 39 no. 2      **Ludwig Van Beethoven**

'French' Suite no. 4 in E flat major, BWV 815      **Johann Sebastian Bach**  
*Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, Gavotte,*  
*Air, Menuet, Gigue*

Clavichord: unfretted, by Peter Bavington after c.1770 attrib. J H Silbermann

**PRELUDE** *v. n.* It is generally to sing or play some irregular and fairly short fancy piece, but passing through the essential strings of the tone, either to establish it, or to prepare one's voice or to place one's hand on an instrument before beginning a piece of music. But on the organ and harpsichord, the art of preluding is more significant; it involves composing and playing impromptu pieces laden with all that composition has to offer in terms of design, fugue, imitation, modulation, and harmony. It is especially in preluding that great musicians, free from the extreme subservience to rules imposed on them by critics on paper, make those skilful transitions shine forth, delighting their listeners. Here, it is not enough to be a good composer, nor to master the keyboard, nor to have a skilled and practiced hand; one must also possess that spark of genius and inventive spirit that allows one to find and immediately develop the subjects most conducive to harmony and most pleasing to the ear.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78), *Dictionary of Music* (1767)

The word 'prelude' is usually associated with the words 'fugue' and 'Bach', but in many ways it was the ultimate opportunity for composers to mould their technique into whatever abstract form they felt. The art of 'preluding' was a standard part of a musician's training and it signified a style of improvisation that could be formal or free-form, according to the needs of the performer. Preludes could be a modulatory scheme to link two pieces in unconnected keys; they could also be physical time-creators to allow other performers to move positions – for example around a church so that they were present in another area. In many ways, fantasia and prelude were much the same thing – though the implication was that a Fantasia was a more substantial composition, especially in the writing of CPE Bach. This programme highlights Rousseau's assertion that 'great musicians...shine forth' in their Preludes. Bach's masterful chord-sequence which opens one of the cornerstones of Western keyboard literature is contrasted with the quirky inventiveness of the two Beethoven modulating preludes – one an exercise in masterly transposition and the other a brilliant example of how to do the same thing in a quarter of the time. Bach's favourite student, JL Krebs, tributes his master with a homage to Bach's Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue featuring Krebs' own lively harmonic language. Finally Bach's fourth French Suite shows how the Preluding basis of harmonic structure is also at the heart of Baroque compositional technique – most notable in the sublime opening Allemande.

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**Steven Devine** is renowned as a keyboard player specialising in historic instruments and a music director who has worked with many of the leading musicians and groups around the world. He is Principal Keyboard Player for the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment (OAE). In addition he is Artistic Advisor of The English Haydn Festival and Music Director of New Chamber Opera, Oxford. Recent recording releases have included Bach Harpsichord Concertos with the OAE, the complete harpsichord music of Bach's favourite student – Johann Ludwig Krebs – and Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*. Steven teaches harpsichord, fortepiano and continuo at the Royal Academy of Music and is Early Keyboard Consultant to the Royal Welsh and Royal Birmingham conservatoires.

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# YORK EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL

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York Early Music Festival is administered by the National Centre for Early Music  
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