

**CHANDOS**

# *Busoni*

Fantasia contrappuntistica

Chopin Variations

Sonatina prima

Sonatina seconda

Prelude and Fugue, BWV 532

Toccatà and Fugue, BWV 565

(Bach, transcribed Busoni)

**PETER DONOHOE**

piano

**KARL LUTCHMAYER**

piano





Scherl / Süddeutsche Zeitung / Alamy Stock Photo

Ferruccio Busoni, c. 1920

## Ferruccio Busoni (1866 – 1924)

### **Toccata and Fugue, K B 29** (1899)\* 8:19

in D minor • in d-Moll • en ré mineur

Transcription for Solo Piano

of Toccata and Fugue in D minor, BWV 565 (1708?)

by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1750)

[1] Adagio – Prestissimo – (Meno Presto) –  
Prestissimo – Quasi Adagio – 2:41

[2] Fuga. Allegro sostenuto – Recitativo – Adagissimo –  
Presto – Vivace – Molto Adagio 5:37

### **Prelude and Fugue, K B 20** (1888)\* 11:07

in D major • in D-Dur • en ré majeur

Transcription for Solo Piano

of Prelude and Fugue, BWV 532 (1708 – 12?)

by Johann Sebastian Bach

[3] Präludium. Moderato – Alla breve – Adagio – 5:23

[4] Fuga. Allegro moderato 5:44

**5**      **Variationen und Fuge in freier Form über Fr. Chopins**  
**c-Moll Präludium, Op. 22, K 213** (1884, revised 1922)\*      **12:41**

Sostenuto – Largo – Sostenuto (all breve) –  
(En Carillon) –  
Fantasia. Tempo libero – Andante –  
Tempo libero – Presto – Allegro deciso –  
Scherzo finale (Vivace misurato) –  
(Hommage à Chopin) Tempo di Valse, tranquillo moderato –  
Tempo dello Scherzo

**6**      **Sonatina [prima], K 257** (1910)\*      **9:53**

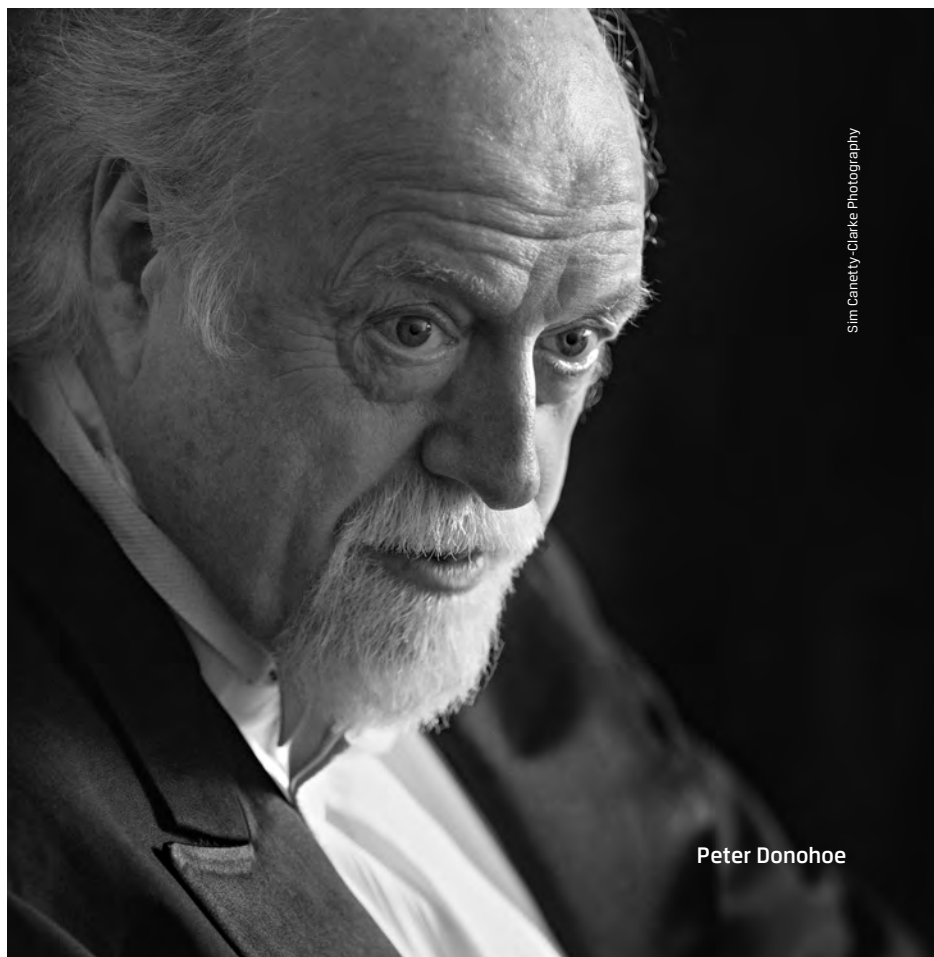
Semplice, commovente – Molto calmo –  
Tempo iniziativo – Più tranquillo – Più tranquillo, dolcissimo –  
Tempo I – Allegretto elegante –  
Teneramente, come da principio – Poco meno mosso –  
Poco più mosso, ma sempre sostenuto e molto espressivo –  
Tempo I – Molto sostenuto – Adagio

- 7 **Sonatina seconda, K 259** (1912)<sup>†</sup> 10:26  
 A Mark Hambourg  
 Il tutto vivace, fantastico, con energia, capriccio e sentimento  
 [ ] – Tempo principale – Un poco più sostenuto e posato –  
 Con fuoco, energicissimo – Lento occulto –  
 Andante tranquillo – Meno andante – Poco a poco più andando –  
 Tempo I – Calmissimo – Piuttosto Adagio –  
 Sostenuto, un poco marziale
- Fantasia contrappuntistica, K 256b** (1921)<sup>\*†</sup> 29:55  
*Choral-Variationen über "Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe"*  
*gefolgt von einer Quadrupel-Fuge über ein Bachsches Fragment*  
*für zwei Klaviere*  
 (Chorale Variations on 'Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe',  
 followed by a Quadruple Fugue on a Fragment by Bach  
 for Two Pianos)  
 An das Künstler- und Freundespaar Kwast-Hodapp
- 8 1 **Maestoso deciso – (Tema) –**  
 Allegro (deciso e apertamente) –  
 Quasi lo stesso tempo ma più segretamente –  
 Allegro – Andantino –  
 Alle breve –  
 Quasi la metà di tempo, intimamente e rubato – 10:03

9	2	Fuga I, tranquillissimo – (Tema) –	2:01
10	3	Fuga II (Tema) –	2:16
11	4	Fuga III –	5:26
12	5	Intermezzo (più tranquillo e occultamente) – Lento –	1:23
13	6	Variatio I, a tempo, tranquillo molto –	1:09
14	7	Variatio II. Un'idea più vivace –	0:48
15	8	Variatio III –	1:03
16	9	Cadenza –	1:05
17	10	Fuga IV. Misuratamente vivace –	1:49
18	11	Corale –	
	12	Stretta	2:47
			<b>TT 82:23</b>

**Peter Donohoe** piano\*

**Karl Lutchmayer** piano (left, *Fantasia contrappuntistica*)†



Sim Canetty-Clarke Photography

Peter Donohoe

## Busoni: Fantasia contrappuntistica and Works for Solo Piano

Years ago, as a Cambridge undergraduate, I was asked by my teacher, Roger Smalley, to speak to my classmates about Ferruccio Busoni (1866 – 1924). Armed with a pile of LPs, I played a number of tracks, interspersed with brief commentaries. 'Who would have thought', remarked Smalley, 'that all these pieces were written by just one person?' In 2024, the centenary of his death, many concerts, 'marathons', and *ad hoc* performances were given in honour of Busoni. Gratifying as it has been to see his music acquire new admirers, Smalley's remark still rings in my ears.

Some composers seem to have worked with the same pen from the cradle to the grave. Others changed direction repeatedly, moving in step with the *Zeitgeist* or the prevailing political situation. The foremost of these was undoubtedly Igor Stravinsky; another, spurred ever onwards by his own technical innovations, was Arnold Schoenberg.

If the music of Serge Rachmaninoff can be compared to a finely tailored suit which he wore all his life, whatever the weather, Busoni's can be perceived as a whole

wardrobe of suits, some of which fitted better than others. As a composer, Busoni reinvented himself from one work to the next, 'toujours en avant'. Sets of pieces, such as the Sonatinas or the Elegies for piano, were thrown together seemingly at random. The catalogue of original compositions runs to 303 items, but Busoni dismissed the first 243 of them – over eighty per cent – as juvenilia, asserting that he had found his true voice only in the Second Violin Sonata, composed in 1898. His lack of consistency made him vulnerable, however, to the charge of never having found a true voice at all.

Beneath the surface, his work was governed by self-imposed principles which he observed with a consistency bordering on obsession:

1. Sense of mission. Notwithstanding his aversion to the 'Apostles of the Ninth Symphony' and his abhorrence of Wagner, he was as eager to create 'great works' as any of his contemporaries. During his years of apprenticeship, in Vienna and Graz, he strove, behind the plethora of occasional pieces, for more substantial goals: a Requiem (1881), a full-length cantata (*Il sabato del villaggio*,

1882), an opera, *Sigune*, which he never completed, and the 'Chopin' Variations, of 1884. Further milestones were set down after 1900: the Piano Concerto (1904), the *Fantasia contrappuntistica* (1910), and *Die Brautwahl* (1911), his first completed opera. Derided in its day, the Piano Concerto has since established itself as something of a popular favourite; the *Fantasia contrappuntistica* remains a challenge for performers and listeners alike; *Die Brautwahl* flopped at its world première and has since been rarely heard. To transcend these triumphs and setbacks, Busoni worked untiringly on a final, all-embracing, operatic synthesis, *Doktor Faust*, in which he achieved the miracle of merging the many voices of previous compositions into one.

2. Borrowing, transcribing, remodelling. Some of his borrowings from other composers are unidentifiable or obscure; others are parodistic; occasionally Busoni takes a piece and builds a protective wall around it. An example of the first is the *Berceuse élégiaque* (1909), the opening theme of which seems to echo some forgotten Italian lullaby; likewise, in the Piano Concerto, one of the principal themes juxtaposes two lines of plainchant overheard in Strasbourg Cathedral, answered in flanking movements by snatches of Italian folksong.

For parodies, one need look no further than the one-act opera *Arlecchino* (1914–16), which runs the gamut from Beethoven, Donizetti, and Verdi to dance rhythms of the music hall. In the *Fantasia contrappuntistica*, Busoni provided a safe place for the unfinished *Contrapunctus XIV* from Bach's *Die Kunst der Fuge* (The Art of Fugue), protecting it with a bulwark built on 'Hoffen und Bangen' (hope and fear, his own words), stabilised by a Lutheran choral.

3. Legibility and notational precision. These would appear to be the concern primarily of engravers, copyists, and scholars. Even Bach's exquisite calligraphy is inaudible (though, for those who care, all Bach's autograph scores are accessible online), while even the most shambolic autographs of Beethoven concern us no longer, for experts have long since deciphered them. Busoni wrote with an elegant, Italianate hand and took the pride of a bibliophile in the beauty of his manuscripts. After World War I, when paper was in short supply, he went out of his way to obtain the finest still available, which tells us much about his self-esteem, but also about his love of luxury. On the practical side, as he was a conscientious proof-reader, there has never been an urgent need for corrected new editions of his published works.

**Variationen und Fuge in freier Form über  
Fr. Chopins c-Moll Präludium, Op. 22**

While taking their cue from Chopin, the Variations (1884) on his C minor Prelude lay oblations at the feet of Brahms: a hybrid conjunction, but unsurprising for a young man striving to make his mark in Vienna, where Brahms reigned supreme. Erinn Knyt observes that

Busoni turns a homorhythmic piece [i.e. the Prelude of Chopin] into a contrapuntal playground, and uses the counterpoint to evoke non-traditional tonal relationships.

In 1912, Busoni considered the work 'not worth saving'. In 1922, however, at the request of the pianist Frieda Kwast-Hodapp, he threw out a life-line, reducing the number of variations from nineteen to ten. 'The boundless energy of the young composer becomes a controlled exercise in irony and levity', writes Anna Ficarella.

Busoni's intention in the revised version of 1922 was to eliminate 'Germanic' heaviness... and give the work a clear form without any pretence of intensifying its meaning or plumbing further depths.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ...lo slancio baldanzoso del giovane compositore diventa un controllato esercizio di ironia e levità. L'intento di Busoni nella rielaborazione del 1922 sarà anzitutto di eliminare ogni pesantezza "germanica" (dunque brahmsiana, verrebbe di pensare) e dare una "forma chiara", senza alcuna pretesa di intensificare significati e conferire ulteriore profondità.

The original of 1884 ranks nonetheless as the finest achievement of Busoni's formative years.

**Sonatina / Sonatina seconda**

If the Sonatinas have anything in common at all, then it is their Latin titles. Figuratively speaking, they embark on a journey into the unknown. The First (1910) strides out blithely into *terra incognita*; the Second (1912) rushes past it into a realm of black magic and paludal nightmare. Separating the second pair of Sonatinas from the first, the outbreak of World War I caused Busoni to turn abruptly in his tracks. The Third Sonatina (1915) longs for the innocence of childhood, the Fourth (1917) summons up images of crisp snow and the warmth of a Christmas fireplace. The third pair seeks comfort in the values of the past. In the Fifth Sonatina 'in signo Joannis Sebastiani Magni' (under the [zodiacal] sign of Johann Sebastian the Great) (1918), a fantasy and fugue freely adapted from an original work of Bach, Busoni bows in homage before the master. The Sixth, *Sonatina super Carmen* (1920), wipes the dirt from windows blackened by shellfire and looks out quizzically onto a world shaken by war but still intact, as epitomized by the indestructible music of Georges Bizet.

#### **Fantasia contrappuntistica for two pianos**

Chorale Variations – Fuga I – Fuga II – Fuga III – Intermezzo – Variatio I – Variatio II – Variatio III – Cadenza – Fuga IV – Chorale – Stretta

When Busoni chose Faust as the protagonist of his crowning operatic masterpiece, he was aware that vying with Goethe was tantamount to putting his head on the block and waiting for the critics' axe to fall. Likewise, when he chose the title 'Große Fuge' for his completion of Bach's unfinished *Fuga a 3 Soggetti*, he risked comparison with Beethoven, which would presumably have turned out to his disadvantage. However, the work was never published under that title. The *Große Fuge* was printed, in 1910, in a limited edition of 100 copies, and supplanted after a few months by the so-called *edizione definitiva*, prefaced by Busoni's Third Elegy for piano, 'Meine Seele bangt und hofft zu dir...':

In 1912 followed a simplified and abridged *editio minore* (twenty-one pages as opposed to the forty-five-page *edizione definitiva*), containing a new prelude, based on the same chorale melody as before, followed by an abridged and simplified reading of the fugue. In 1911 the *edizione definitiva* was orchestrated by Frederick Stock, the music director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and in 1912 Wilhelm Middelschulte, another of Busoni's Chicago friends (the so-called

'Gothics'), published a technically challenging transcription for organ.

With five versions already in circulation, it was inevitable that more would follow. Again, it was Frieda Kwast-Hodapp who took the initiative, suggesting that she and her husband, the pianist James Kwast, would welcome the chance of performing the work on two pianos. 'The piece is a disproportionate task for ten fingers', admitted Busoni, despite having performed the solo version himself quite frequently. In the summer of 1921 he prepared the two-piano version in a spirit of clarity and synthesis, combining elements of the previous versions, and prefacing the printed score with an architectural drawing based on the Palace of the Popes, at Avignon, to illustrate and explain the work's structural ramifications.

#### **Prelude and Fugue in D major, BWV 532 / Toccata and Fugue in D minor, BWV 565**

In *Ferruccio Busoni, a Biography*, Edward Dent mentions that Busoni once heard Bach's Prelude and Fugue in D major, BWV 532, on the organ of the Thomaskirche in Leipzig, an experience so galvanising that he promptly sat down and transcribed the work for piano. When did this happen, I wondered, and who was the organist? As an enquiry sent to the

Bach Archive, in Leipzig, went unanswered, I did a little research of my own. The outcome was unexpected: during Busoni's residence in Leipzig, from December 1886 to September 1888, the Thomaskirche was *closed for renovation*; in 1885 the organ was *dismantled and sold for scrap*. Construction work on the inside and outside of the church was completed in the spring of 1889, as was the new organ, built by Wilhelm Sauer. By that time, Busoni had been living and teaching in Helsinki for over six months.

He heard BWV 532, evidently for the first time, on 19 April 1888 in Leipzig's New Gewandhaus, performed by Paul Homeyer, one of the finest organists of his day. Busoni gave the world première of his own transcription at a matinée concert in the Old Gewandhaus just three weeks later, on 13 May.

Dent's beautiful story, which has been retold time and again, dissolves into thin air.

A critic at the Leipzig concert observed that 'Mr Busoni [sic] has enriched the piano literature, especially that intended for concert performance, with a valuable new work'. Strangely enough, Busoni's publishers, Breitkopf und Härtel, took over a year to reach the same conclusion. Further transcriptions followed at a leisurely pace: the Prelude and Fugue in E flat major, BWV 552 ('St Anne'), was completed in the summer of 1890; the

celebrated Chaconne in D minor, from BWV 1004, followed in 1893; the Ten Chorale Preludes were completed in 1897; finally, in 1899, followed the Toccata and Fugue in D minor, BWV 565, and the Toccata in C major, BWV 564, published in one volume.

The Bach transcriptions of Busoni are better known and far more frequently performed than any of his original compositions. Like most great pianists of his time, he was prone to tinker with the music he played, be it by Mozart, Beethoven, Liszt, César Franck, or even Schoenberg (he prepared a 'Konzertmäßige Interpretation' [performing interpretation] of Schoenberg's Op. 11 No. 2, but never played it in public). In the case of Bach's organ works, he left the musical texts substantially unaltered: a token of unbounded respect.

For virtuoso pianists and those striving to attain that status, these transcriptions are standard repertoire. Many listeners are probably unaware that the name behind the hyphen in Bach-Busoni stands for a composer whose music can be baffling, colourful, diverse, and enthralling – one at a time or all at once.

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Born in Manchester in 1953, **Peter Donohoe** CBE studied at Chetham's School of Music

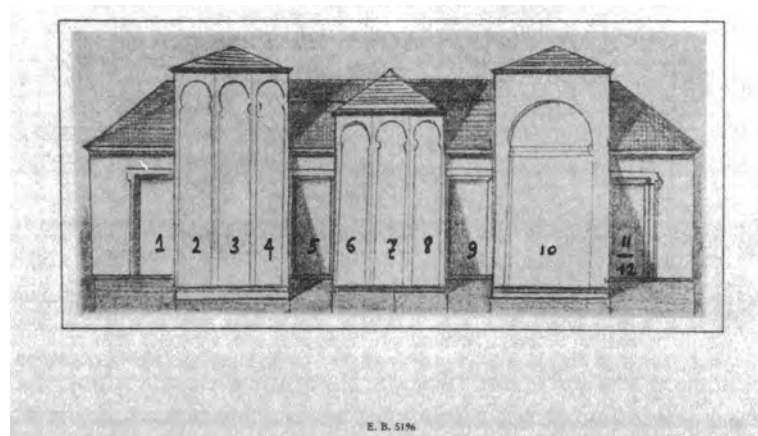
and Leeds University before going on to study at the Royal Northern College of Music with Derek Wyndham and in Paris with Olivier Messiaen and Yvonne Loriod. He is acclaimed as one of the foremost pianists of our time, for his musicianship, stylistic versatility, and commanding technique. He has performed with all the major London orchestras and, across the European continent, with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Gewandhausorchester, Münchner Philharmoniker, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre philharmonique de Radio France, Wiener Symphoniker, Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, and Berliner Philharmoniker. In the United States, he has appeared with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and Cleveland Orchestra. In recent seasons he has appeared with the London Symphony Orchestra, Dresdner Philharmonie, Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra, St Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra, RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, Belarusian State Symphony Orchestra, and City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Conductors such as Sir Andrew Davis, Gustavo Dudamel, Christoph Eschenbach, Daniel Harding, Neeme Järvi, Lorin Maazel, Kurt Masur, Sir Simon Rattle, Yevgeny

Svetlanov, and Robin Ticciati have all sought to work with him. He has performed at festivals worldwide, among them the Edinburgh International Festival, Festival International de Piano de La Roque d'Anthéron, Klavier-Festival Ruhr, and Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival, made more than twenty appearances at the BBC Proms, and given concerts as far afield as South America, China, Hong Kong, and South Korea. As a chamber musician he gives numerous recitals internationally, continues working with his long-standing duo partner Martin Roscoe, and has collaborated with artists such as Raphael Wallfisch, Elizabeth Watts, and Noriko Ogawa. Peter Donohoe is in high demand as a jury member for international piano competitions around the world, his sizeable discography has won numerous awards and critical accolades, he is an honorary doctor of music at seven UK universities, and he was awarded a CBE for services to classical music in the New Year's Honours List 2010.

The first Steinway Artist of Indian origin, **Karl Lutchmayer** is equally renowned as a concert pianist, a lecturer, and a broadcaster, performing across the globe and having worked with conductors including Lorin Maazel and Sir Andrew Davis. He studied the piano at the Royal College of Music

where he was awarded the John Hopkinson Medal by Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother, and to which he subsequently returned as a Constant and Kit Lambert Fellow. He has broadcast on BBC Television and Radio, All India Radio, and Classic FM. Particularly acclaimed for his lecture recitals, he has over the last twenty-five years given a landmark London series, Conversational Concerts™, which has included festivals to celebrate the Liszt (2011) and Alkan (2013) bicentenaries and the music of Enescu. He has also given more than ninety world premières, many works having been written especially for him. He is widely regarded as a leading authority on the music of Busoni, which has been central to his career as both an academic and a performer for over thirty years. Recently, this

culminated in the curatorship of a three-day Busoni festival in London, in which he gave solo and chamber recitals, including a world première, and performances of both the famous Piano Concerto in C major and the much less well-known early Concerto for Piano and String Quartet (1878), for which he received extensive critical acclaim. He has also undertaken musicological research at the universities of both Oxford and Cambridge. For the last decade Karl Lutchmayer has focussed much of his time and attention on nurturing the burgeoning Western classical music scene in India, his family home. It was for this educational work that he was awarded the Bharat Gaurav (Pride of India) Lifetime Achievement Award, in 2015, and the Indians of the World Medal, in June 2022.



Busoni's architectural plan for 'Fantasia contrappuntistica', inspired by the Papal palace in Avignon

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Steinway Model D Concert Grand Pianos courtesy of Wyastone Concert Hall: No. 1, serial no. 589 463 (2011); No. 2 (*Fantasia contrappuntistica* only, played by Karl Lutchmayer), serial no. 531 743 (1994, reconditioned by Jeff Shackell, 2007)  
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Karl Lutchmayer

BUSONI: FANTASIA CONTRAPPUNTISTICA, ETC. – Donohoe / Lutchmayer

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# Ferruccio Busoni (1866–1924)

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PETER DONOHOE piano\*

KARL LUTCHMAYER piano (left, *Fantasia contrappuntistica*)†

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BUSONI: FANTASIA CONTRAPPUNTISTICA, ETC. – Donohoe / Lutchmayer

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