

RACHEL LAURIN

BACH ORGAN TRANSCRIPTIONS



RUDOLF VON BECKERATH ORGAN [1960]

BASILICA OF SAINT JOSEPH'S ORATORY
MONTREAL, QUEBEC, CANADA

**Pro
Organo**

7298

**Pro
Organo**

7298

RACHEL LAURIN BACH ORGAN TRANSCRIPTIONS

In its modern-day use in music, the term transcription refers to two distinct actions: penning down a melody or a piece which was previously unwritten, such as Bartók's notation of Hungarian, Slovakian and Romanian folksongs; and reworking a composition to allow it to be played by an instrument (or ensemble) other than that for which it was originally intended, such as Liszt's solo piano transcriptions of Beethoven's symphonies.

Transcription in the latter sense is the focus of this recording, and to limit confusion, it is worth pointing out that transcription and arrangement are not exact synonyms: in theory, a transcription tends to be a faithful adaptation, whereas an arrangement usually changes significant features of the original.

Although transcribing may at first glance seem like an uncomplicated act — the piece simply needs to be reimagined for a different instrument, none of its rhythms or notes are to be changed — the art and craft of the transcriber become apparent in the new adaptation because each instrument possesses

Recorded in April 1997.

Recording producer, sound engineer
and technical director: Jean de la Durantaye

Remastered in 2025 for **Pro Organo**
by Frederick Hohman

its own characteristics and limitations.

Over the course of several centuries, transcriptions have enabled the circulation and exchange of musical ideas and styles across regional and national borders, serving as a means of dissemination (bringing a work to a wider audience), a musical tribute (playing a piece one particularly cherishes), or a pedagogical tool (acquiring skill as a composer). In fact, some of Western music's most renowned figures have written transcriptions, including Bach, Liszt, Brahms, Busoni, Ravel, Mahler, and Rachmaninov.

Johann Sebastian Bach's use of transcription encompassed his entire lifetime, from his student years copying scores by candlelight, through his organ transcriptions of music by Buxtehude, his transcriptions of concertos by Vivaldi, Marcello and Telemann, to the transcription of some of his own works.

The ***Concerto in D minor for Keyboard and Strings, BWV 1052***, is based on movements

Bach had previously written for his church cantatas BWV 146 and BWV 188, both of which have solo obbligato parts for the organ. The French organ virtuoso Marcel Dupré devised a transcription of the concerto's first movement, and Rachel Laurin transcribed the remaining two movements so as to perform the entire concerto in concert and on this recording.

The ***Schübler Chorales*** are transcriptions, by Bach himself, of chorale settings and arias from his church cantatas BWV 645 to 650. The title comes from the engraver and publisher Johann Georg Schübler, one of his former students, who is named on the title page. These were among the few of Bach's works published during his lifetime, and are now some of his most popular organ works.

Tracks 8 to 11 feature ***Sinfonias and Chorales*** transcribed by the well-known organists-composers Edward Power Biggs, Edward Shippen Barnes, Marcel Dupré, and Maurice Duruflé. These works are as effective and expressive on the organ as in their original choral and orchestral versions, the organ offering a wide range of timbres which allow the musical textures to unfold simultaneously on multiple levels.

Rachel Laurin transcribed the ***Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue, BWV 903***, in 1996, guided, on the one hand, by the spirit of Bach's

major organ pieces such as the *Fantasy and Fugue in G minor, BWV 542*, and on the other, by Leopold Stokowski's orchestral transcriptions of the *Passacaglia in C minor, BWV 582*, and the *Tocatta and Fugue in D minor, BWV 565*.

The fantasia is made up of three contrasting musical elements: toccata writing with quick runs going up and down the keyboard; arpeggiated chords with frequent modulations; recitative passages with richly ornamented and expressive melodies. The overall effect is that of a flamboyant improvisation.

The fugue's theme features a rising chromatic melody. The somewhat strict writing of the movement's opening gradually becomes more relaxed, and in this transcription, the theme's entries are very often highlighted by using a different keyboard or registration. The volume of sound steadily increases until the work's conclusion; as the climax is reached, we hear the cadenza added by Rachel Laurin. The work closes in a dramatic atmosphere created by the full power and grandeur of the organ.

Notes based on those written by Rachel Laurin in 1998, and edited in 2025 by Marc Bourdeau for the Rachel Laurin estate.



The Canadian composer, organist, improviser, teacher and speaker **RACHEL LAURIN** (1961-2023) was born in Saint-Benoît, Québec. After her studies at the Conservatoire de musique de Montréal, she became the assistant of Raymond Daveluy, titular organist of Saint Joseph's Oratory (Montréal), a position she held from 1986 to 2002. She was titular organist at Notre-Dame Cathedral (Ottawa) from 2002 to 2006, subsequently leaving this position to devote herself fully to concerts, composition, leading master classes, and presenting lectures.

She gave numerous concerts and recitals in Canada, the United States, and Europe (France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, United Kingdom, Switzerland, etc.). Under the auspices of the Royal Canadian College of Organists (RCCO), she travelled on more than one occasion across the country to present organ recitals and workshops.

Notable performances include Raymond Daveluy's *Concerto for Organ and Orchestra* with the Hamilton Philharmonic in 1999, Louis Vierne's *Six Symphonies* (in three recitals) in Montréal in 2000 and in Ottawa in 2001, and the première of Jacques Hétu's *Concerto for Organ and Orchestra* with the Edmonton Symphony in 2002 for the inauguration of the Winspear Centre's Létourneau organ, a work she reprised in 2008 with the Ottawa Symphony at the National Arts Centre, and with the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony in 2009 at Toronto's Metropolitan United Church for the RCCO's Centennial Organ Festival.

As an organist-composer, lecturer and teacher, she was a frequent guest at several American and Canadian universities, including Yale University, Houston University, Saint Thomas University, Baylor University, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Mount Royal College, University of Saint Lawrence, Kansas City University, and the University of Alberta. She also taught organ improvisation at the Conservatoire de musique de Montréal, the École de

musique sacrée d'Épinal (France), and the Mount Royal International Summer School.

Rachel Laurin became an Associate Composer of the Canadian Music Centre in 1989, and served as a “house composer” at Leupold Editions from 2006 until her untimely passing in 2023. Composing almost exclusively on commissions, she wrote over one hundred works for solo instruments, chamber music ensembles, orchestra, voice, and choir. Her compositions are published by North American publishing houses and are regularly performed — notably those for organ — in renowned concert halls and illustrious places of worship at the four corners of the globe.

Her discography, as an organist and as a composer, includes some thirty albums for labels such as Pro Organo, Raven, Delphian, Regent, Acis, Motette, Atma Classique, Centaur Records, Centrediscs, MDG, Gothic, CBC Records, Analekta, Amplitude, Société Nouvelle d'Enregistrement, Musicus/Fidelio, and Richelieu/ SRC.

Rachel Laurin received several awards and honors recognizing her valuable contribution to the organ repertoire: Holtkamp-AGO Composition Prize (2008); First Prize at the Marilyn Mason New Organ Music Competition (2009); member, since 2016, of the Honorary Committee of the Fédération Francophone des Amis de l'Orgue (FFAO); First Prize at the Orgelkids Composition Contest (2019);

Distinguished Composer Award (2022) from the American Guild of Organists (AGO); winner of the Pogorzelski-Yankee Competition for New Organ Music (2022); Composer-in-Residence in 2023–2024 at Salle Bourgie (Montréal), a season during which her works, including two premières, were featured in four concerts.

In her memory, *The American Organist* magazine devoted some twenty pages to her in the September 2024 issue; that same month, Minnesota Public Radio's Pipedreams broadcast an in-memoriam program, hosted by Michael Barone and entitled “Remembering Rachel”; and in 2025, the RCCO organized the first edition of the Rachel Laurin Composition Competition.

For further information,
including a complete list of her compositions,
please visit the **RachelLaurin.com** website.



ABOUT THIS RECORDING

The recording sessions were held in 1997, and the recording was originally released as a Compact Disc in 1998. The aim of Jean de la Durantaye, the project's sound engineer and producer, was the pursuit of sound realism. His recording technique employed a pair of omni-directional microphones, ensuring a natural reproduction of stereophonic effects, good overall balance, true fidelity of timbre, and full dynamic range. Others assisting in the production were: technical assistant Denis Guérin; mastering engineer Jean-François Chicoine; audio consultant Yolande Roberge; and music supervisor Raymond Daveluy.



ORGAN HISTORY

German organ builder Rudolf von Beckerath (1907-1976) installed a 44-stop organ in Trinity Lutheran Church in Cleveland in 1957. While he was in the United States, he made a trip to Montréal, at the invitation of organists Kenneth Gilbert, Lucienne Arel, Raymond Daveluy, and Gaston Arel. It turned out to be a decisive visit because he would later install 3 instruments in the city: the first one in Queen Mary Road United Church (1959), the second in the Basilica of Saint Joseph's Oratory (1960), and the third in the Immaculée-Conception Church (1961).

Construction of the organ intended for Saint Joseph's Oratory was completed in Beckerath's Hamburg workshops in 1959. A total of 167 cases were sent by boat to Montréal, and the installation of the instrument took 8 months. It was blessed on 13 November 1960 by Bishop Sebastiano Baggio, Apostolic Delegate to Canada, and was dedicated to Canadian soldiers killed in action during both World Wars. The organ was inaugurated the same day by the distinguished French organist André Marchal, along with Raymond Daveluy, the Oratory's organist.

The Beckerath underwent restoration from September 2011 to June 2012. Specialists from Montréal's Juget-Sinclair firm dismantled, cleaned, and restored, as needed, each part of the Basilica's organ. No major modifications were made to the instrument, only certain mechanical components were replaced.

Organ Specification • Von Beckerath Organ [1960] • 78 stops, 117 ranks, 5811 pipes
5 Manuals (each with a compass of 56 notes), Pedalboard (compass of 32 notes)

I. POSITIF

Montre 8
Bourdon 8
Prestant 4
Flûte conique 4
Nazard 2 2/3
Doublette 2
Gemshorn 2
Tierce 1 3/5
Larigot 1 1/3
Plein-Jeu V
Saqueboute 16
Cromone 8
Chalumeau 4
Trompette 8

PÉDALE

Montre 32
Montre 16
Flûte 16
Soubasse 16
Montre 8
Flûte creuse 8
Prestant 4
Flûte à fuseau 4
Cor de nuit 2
Fourniture IV
Plein-Jeu VI
Bombarde 32
Bombarde 16
Basson 16
Trompette 8
Clairon 4

II. GRAND ORGUE

Montre 16
Montre 8
Flûte conique 8
Flûte à cheminée 8
Prestant 4
Cor de nuit 4
Quinte 2 2/3
Doublette 2
Fourniture VI
Cymbale IV
Trombone 16
Trompette 8

III. BOMBARDE

Bourdon 16
Flûte en montre 8
Prestant 4
Gros Nazard 5 1/3
Grosse Tierce 3 1/5
Nazard 2 2/3
Quarte de Nazard 2
Tierce 1 3/5
Grande Fourniture VI
Bombarde en chamade 16
Trompette en chamade 8
Clairon en chamade 4

IV. RÉCIT (enclosed)

Quintaton 16
Principal 8
Flûte à fuseau 8
Gemshorn 8
Gemshorn celeste 8
Prestant 4
Flûte à bec 4
Nazard 2 2/3
Cor de nuit 2
Piccolo 1
Plein-Jeu V
Cymbale III
Cornet VI
Cor anglais 16
Hautbois 4
Musette 4

V. ÉCHO (enclosed)

Bourdon 8
Quintaton 8
Principal en bois 4
Flûte sylvestre 2
Larigot 1 1/3
Sesquialtera II
Plein-Jeu IV
Ranquette 16
Régale 8

Couplers: POS/GO, BB/GO,
REC/GO, GO/PED, BB/PED

Tremblant: Positif, Récit, Bombarde

Mechanical key action, Electric stop action

Electronic combinator, Sequencer

RACHEL LAURIN

BACH ORGAN TRANSCRIPTIONS

All underlying compositions are by Johann Sebastian Bach [1685-1750].

Keyboard Concerto in D minor, BWV 1052

- 1** **I. Allegro** (Marcel Dupré transcription) • 9:05
- 2** **II. Adagio** (Rachel Laurin transcription) • 8:19
- 3** **III. Allegro** (Rachel Laurin transcription) • 9:46

Four of the Schübler Chorale Preludes (J. S. Bach transcriptions)

- 4** **Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme, BWV 645** • 5:15
- 5** **Meine Seele erhebt den Herren, BWV 648** • 3:01
- 6** **Ach bleib bei uns, Herr Jesu Christ, BWV 649** • 2:30
- 7** **Kommst du nun, Jesu, vom Himmel herunter, BWV 650** • 3:16
- 8** **Cantata: Christ lag in Todesbanden, BWV 4: Chorale** (E. Power Biggs transcription) • 3:01
- 9** **Weihnachtsoratorium (Christmas Oratorio), BWV 248: Part 1 – Sinfonia**
(Robert Schaab transcription, revised by Edward Shippen Barnes) • 7:22
- 10** **Cantata: Wir danken dir, Gott, BWV 29: Sinfonia** (Marcel Dupré transcription) • 4:23
- 11** **Cantata: Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben, BWV 147: Part 2 – Chorale**
Jesu bleibet meine Freude (Maurice Duruflé transcription) • 3:40
- 12** **Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue in D minor, BWV 903** (Rachel Laurin transcription) • 16:41

**Pro
Organo**

Total time: 76' 19"

7298

ProOrgano.com

Original music works and transcriptions by Rachel Laurin
are published by The Leupold Foundation.

© 2025 / © 2025 Zarex Corporation. All rights reserved.
Designed, printed & manufactured in the U.S.A. • UPC # 63607 77298 2 9