

Dear Uncle Max

Send questions to Dear Uncle Max, AGO National Headquarters, 475 Riverside Dr., Suite 1260, New York, NY 10115.

Most concert listings of Bach works now come with BWV numbers, which is great if you have those numbers in your Bach library. If most of your Bach library is from an earlier time (Widor-Schweitzer, for example), you have a much more difficult time sorting out and finding specific works. Is there a listing of Bach's compositions that includes the BWV number and a few introductory measures of the music? This would be a very useful resource. Does it exist?

K.H., III.

There are three that fulfill your requirements that I know of. The standard, definitive book is the *Verzeichnis der musikalischen Werke von Johann Sebastian Bach*. Bach-Werke Verzeichnis (BWV), 2nd Edition, Breitkopf und Härtel, Wiesbaden, 1990.

BWV is short for Bach-Werke-Verzeichnis. Der Bach: brook, stream, rivulet—here we mean John S.

Das Werk: multiple meanings, here—composition; Werke is plural.

Das Verzeichnis: list, catalog, inventory, index, register.

So BWV is an index of Bach's compositions, with each of his compositions (or those variously attributed to him) assigned a specific number, BWV 541, for instance. The catalog, index, was compiled and published by Wolfgang Schmieder in 1950 and reissued in an enlarged edition in 1990.

The first printed listing of Bach's works was in his obituary by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach and Johann Friedrich Agricola in Mizler's *Musicalische Bibliothek* of 1754. In 1790, an estate catalog from Carl Philipp Emanuel had sections on JSB's instrumental and vocal works. Wilhelm Friedemann Bach's inheritance did not, unfortunately, get the same treatment. Forkel's biography pushes the process a bit further.

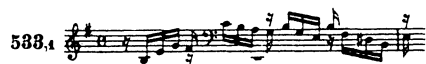
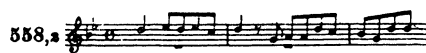
The first thematic catalog comes about 30 years later from Franz Hauser,

who during his operatic career traveled and met with other collectors and provided a list of works in private hands and in antiquarian markets, which proved invaluable. During the 19th century, steps were taken toward a complete edition of the Bach works. From this process came the familiar Peters edition, begun in 1844, of the organ works edited by Grienpenkerl and Roitzsch.

In 1943, after a long process, the final proofs for the BWV were sent to Leipzig for printing—they were, for technical reasons not printed right away, and on December 4, 1943, the sheets that were printed, together with the typesetting material and the engraving plates, were destroyed in an air raid! In short, the manuscript. After the war, a goodly number of plates were found to have survived, plus an old set of proofs. Work continued until the first edition came out. The second edition brought matters up to date with the addition of newly discovered compositions and so forth. A chronological arrangement was not a possibility because of dating difficulties, so under "Works for the Organ" we find the following organization:

Sonatas
Preludes and Fugues
Toccatas
Preludes, Fantasias (individual)
Fugues (individual)
Individual Pieces (Trios, Canzona, etc.)
Concertos
Chorale Settings

Information of various sorts is given, such as Catalog Number, Incipits (first bars), Number of Measures, Descriptions of the Manuscripts, Early Editions, etc. Also a special index of incipits may be found on page 496 ff. Here are two familiar Prelude and Fugue beginnings to illustrate:



You may not find the Schmieder that easy to locate or use when you do find it, but you need to know it is there, and the source of the number system used throughout the world.

The second source, containing the incipits and the BWV numberings, would be the now out-of-print Hermann Keller's *The Organ Works of Bach*, C.F. Peters Corp., 1976, translated from the German by Helen Hewitt. The big advantage here is, of course, English and an easy-to-use alphabetical index on page 295. The index is keyed to volumes of the Peters edition and the older Bach Gesellschaft. Sometimes one needs to check back and forth to be certain the right composition is referred to, but in a case such as "Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland," they are identified concretely if possible: Fughetta, OB, ornamented, a due bassi, c.f. in pedal, then the comments and numbers are given in the text. Being an older book, the Neumeister Chorales are not included and perhaps some other changes. It has the advantage of being self-contained in one volume.

The third source is the three-volume set, *The Organ Music of J.S. Bach* by Peter Williams, Cambridge University Press, 1980. Vol. I discusses the Preludes, Toccatas, Fantasias, Fugues, Sonatas, Concertos, and Miscellaneous Pieces, all arranged by progressive BWV numbers. You need to know the BWV number to find the commentary. Vol. II deals with works based on Chorales, again arranged by BWV numbers. Vol. III, subtitled "A Background," contains essays under the headings:

The Music in Service and Recital (7 articles)

The Music and its Composition (8)


The Music and Its Organ (7)

The Music and Its Performance (6)

Vol. III concludes with a Title Index with BWV numbers in Vols. I–III. If we look under "Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland" in this index, all we find are the BWV numbers 599, 659, 660, 661, and 699. We already know that that should be in Vol. II. Page numbers would save time. This system almost requires that you own all three volumes. Clever. It is very useful to own them—the essays are very stimulating.

The time is here when all editions of Bach ought to contain the numberings—it just ought to be. It is a big task to make number additions to older publications; new ones that lack the numberings are probably questionable.

MAX B. MILLER, FAGO



QUIMBY PIPE ORGANS
INCORPORATED
208 Marshall, P.O. Box 434
Warrensburg, Missouri 64093
Phone: 660-747-3066 Fax: 660-747-2844