

# Ah! Bach!

*a concert sampling Bach's  
compositions with organ, piano, & voice*



*presented by*  
***Brett & Marita Wolgast***  
***Sunday, Oct. 5, 2025 - 3 p.m.***



**First Lutheran  
Musical Arts Series**



**1000 Third Ave SE, Cedar Rapids, IA**



**First Lutheran Church – Musical Arts Series  
Wolgasts in Concert**

Sunday, October 5, 2025, at 3:00 p.m.

**“Ah! Bach!”  
1685-1750**

**PROGRAM**

Fantasie and Fugue in C Minor, BWV 537

Three Catechism Chorales – *Clavierübung III*

1. “*Dies sind die heiligen zehn Gebot*” BWV 678 (The 10 Commandments)
2. “*Vater unser im Himmelreich*” BWV 682 (The Lord’s Prayer)
3. “*Wir glauben all an einen Gott*” BWV 680 (The Nicene Creed)

Fugue in G Major, BWV 577 – (*The Gigue*)

Piano and Organ Duets

Aria: “*Aus Liebe will mein Heiland sterben*”

(from *St. Matthew Passion*, BWV 244)

Concerto in A Major, BWV 1055 – Movement 1

Prelude and Fugue in E Minor, BWV 548 (*The Wedge*)

Following today’s performance, we invite you  
to the lower level fellowship hall for refreshments.

## About the Artists:

### Brett & Marita Wolgast

**Brett and Marita Wolgast** have served on the Music Ministry staff at First Lutheran Church for over 35 years. Additionally, they both have been on the music faculty at Coe College for most of that duration as well.

Brett received his Bachelor of Music degree in Applied Keyboard Performance from Kansas State University as a student of Mary Ellen Sutton and Robert Edwards. He completed graduate work at the University of Iowa with an MA degree in Piano Performance, and MFA and DMA degrees in Organ Performance and Pedagogy. His primary teachers there include Delbert Disselhorst, John Sims, Delores Bruch, and additional, independent study with Catharine Crozier in Los Angeles, CA. Dr. Wolgast received nationwide recognition by winning two national organ competitions: The American Guild of Organists Open Competition in Organ Playing, and the Fort Wayne (IN) National Organ Competition. He has performed throughout the United States as a guest recitalist for AGO chapters and conventions as well as church and civic concert series.

Marita received her Bachelor of Music Education degree from Kansas State University as a student of Robert Edwards. She completed graduate studies at Arizona State University with a MM degree in Piano Performance as a student of John Hamilton.



Marita has frequently performed as an accompanist and collaborative musician with Coe music faculty and students, area musicians, and the Cedar Rapids Concert Chorale, where she also serves as Assistant Music Director.

The Wolgasts are members of the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians, and have served as contributing editors to the ELCA's worship resource *Sundays and Seasons*. Brett is currently a Dean of the River Valley Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, and both are members of the Iowa Music Teachers Association, Handbell Musicians of America, Choristers' Guild, and the Hymn Society. Additionally, the Wolgasts are active in music organizations in Cedar Rapids and eastern Iowa and maintain small, private piano and organ studios. They enjoy spending time with their three adult children and their families including six grandchildren.

## First Lutheran invites you to our upcoming Musical Arts Performances:

### Great American Organists:

**Dr. Stephen Hamilton**

**Sunday, Nov.9, 2025 3 p.m.**

Iowa-native Dr. Stephen Hamilton has established himself as an organist of international acclaim. For nearly 40 years, his name has been synonymous with "concert touring organist." Throughout this time, his concerts have included most major venues and churches throughout the US and Europe. One of many rave reviews states, "[Dr. Hamilton's] performance had to be one of the supreme moments of music making in this year's or any other year's Orgelfest offerings."

This concert will be amazing!

### Lunch in the Loft: Music for the Season

**Wednesdays, Dec. 3, 10 & 17, 2025,**

**at 12:05 p.m.**

Bring a sack lunch or your favorite takeout and come to FLC to enjoy this series of midday and midweek concerts of holiday music performed by organists and musicians from the Cedar Rapids community.

### 2025 Performers include ...

Dec. 3 - Marilyn Mark, St. Paul Lutheran

Dec. 10 - Robin Wagner, St. Andrew Lutheran

Dec. 17 - Brett & Marita Wolgast, First Lutheran



## Thank You for Your Support!

**Music is central to the mission of First Lutheran Church.** Our newly renovated sanctuary features outstanding acoustics and houses exceptional instruments: the Opus 50 Pipe Organ by Parsons, a Steinway grand piano, and a restored harpsichord.



Through our Musical Arts Series, we share these gifts with the community, offering free concerts that inspire and uplift throughout the year. The series is sustained by voluntary donations, which support artist honorariums, accommodations, publicity, and hospitality.

**Support the series at [firstlutherancr.org/music-arts](https://firstlutherancr.org/music-arts)**

### Acknowledgements

#### Musical Arts Series – First Lutheran Church

Many thanks to our corporate and individual sponsors, and to all who support the Musical Arts Series at First Lutheran. Your gifts and support are most appreciated.

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## Program Notes

### Ah! Bach! — The Wolgasts in Concert Recital

October 5, 2025, at 3:00 PM

First Lutheran Church—Musical Arts Series

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) is considered to be one of, if not the most influential composer in all of music history. From conception and discovery to today, Bach's music continues to be a prime source for study, theory, performance, aspiration, and inspiration. For me personally, his music, in all genres, is perpetually intriguing, inspiring, and gratifying to hear and perform.

Bach was a highly prolific composer with compositions in all the musical genres of his day with the exception of opera. Despite the enormity of his output, only a handful of his works were published during his lifetime, with the majority remaining unknown or unheard of for decades after his death. Similarly, and perhaps the fate of genius, Bach rarely received or enjoyed during his lifetime the respect and reverence given to him today. In all likelihood, such accolades and recognition were secondary to him: Music and his musical talents were gifts from God and were to be developed and used in God's service. *Soli Deo Gloria* - "To God alone, glory," an inscription that Bach often wrote at the end of his compositions, provides all the insight we need for his vocation and purpose.

The organ music of Bach represents the primary core repertoire for the instrument. This vast and diverse repertoire spans his entire career and continues today to be a desired benchmark for music composition and performance competency. It is our hope that this concert will provide a sampling of the endless variety, ingenuity, and joy found in this master's music.

We begin the concert with *Fantasie and Fugue in C Minor*. This work is among Bach's most expressive and intense compositions for the instrument. The bipartite *Fantasie* opens with an ever-rising, emotive theme in fugal imitation over a lengthy tonic pedal point that gives way only when the pedal takes over the theme. In contrast, a second theme of descending sigh motives takes up the counterpoint leading to an intensification of rhythm and the first major

cadence. Bach, then, restarts the process, this time over a lengthy dominant pedal point, but also with more complexity, thematic development and elaboration. The movement ends in a dramatic, unique manner on a half-cadence, thereby requiring the subsequent *Fugue* to provide completeness to the *Fantasie*.

*The Fugue*, in three parts, however provides no relief from but only increases the emotional intensity. It is a double-fugue with two distinct subjects, each with their own expositions and developments, followed by an expanded return of the first subject material. The first subject is clearly influenced by the opening theme of the *Fantasie* with the interval of a minor-6th being structurally important in both their constructions. Once the minor-6th is reached, arpeggiation of the diminished-7th chord followed by descending stepwise motion back to tonic forms the second half of the subject. The harmonic content of the first subject—tonic, diminished-7th, tonic—a half-step relationship, foreshadows the second subject, a rising melody of half-steps. The chromatic nature of this second subject produces some of the most harmonically intense and complex writing in all of Bach's works. The zenith of this middle section is reached when all voices come together with a double-trill, quick pedal figuration and a dramatic half-cadence leading to the return and expansion of the opening subject material. While not as lengthy as many of Bach's other works of this type, this piece reveals the composer in the height of his craft and pushing the limits of contrapuntal development and harmonic complexity of his day.

*The Clavierübung* is a massive, four-part collection of music for keyboard instruments. It represents Bach's attempt to summarize all music genres of his day, albeit for the harpsichord or organ. The four distinct parts were published during the years from 1731 to 1742.

*Clavierübung, Part III*, specifically for the organ offers not only a summary of organ composition of the time, containing both free and chorale-based works, but also an overview of Lutheran worship and doctrine. Symbolism abounds throughout the set. Numerology, formal design, organization of the pieces, and musical themes are all used and carefully crafted by Bach to depict the Holy Trinity, God's Word from the Bible and paraphrases in the chorale texts, and Lutheran doctrine. In total, Part III contains 27 pieces (3x3x3) and is a celebration of our Triune God and of Bach's devout faith.

*Dies sind die heiligen Zehn Gebot* ("These are the Holy Ten Commands") is appropriately the tenth chorale setting in the collection. It provides a descriptive picture of God's law being handed down to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Bach places the chorale melody in canon (law) in the middle voices clearly indicating that the Commandments should be central to our lives.

This placement also symbolizes Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, as the fulfillment of the law and our refuge when we invariably fall short. This setting consists of 60 measures in two 30-measure halves, symbolic of the two tablets upon which the Commandments were written. Canonic imitation in the upper voices followed by “sigh” motives further emphasize the Law and the difficulty we have being obedient to these requirements. The final phrase finds the sigh-motives inverted in a triumphal ascent suggesting that God is indeed merciful and will be with us when we stumble and fall short of His grace.

*Vater unser im Himmelreich* (“Our Father in Heaven Above”), Bach’s setting of the Lord’s Prayer, is undoubtedly his most intricate and complex chorale prelude. Set in trio texture with its inherent challenges, Bach then adds the chorale melody in canonic imitation along with highly developed rhythmic motives, voice crossing, and considerable chromaticism. Despite the sophisticated writing, the desired effect is one of lightness and agility. Symbolic imagery and text painting stems from the ascending Lombard rhythmic sighs—our prayers rising to heaven; descending triplets—God responding to our prayers; and canonic chorale phrases in the middle—Jesus Christ as our advocate and mediator.

*Wir glauben all an einen Gott* (“We All Believe in One True God”) is somewhat of an enigma among chorale works in this set in that only the first phrase of the chorale is used throughout the composition, in the treatment of rhythm with syncopations, suspensions over strong beats, and in the abstract tonal center due to chromatic alterations. The piece is a three-voice fugue with a pedal ostinato. The fugue subject, based on the opening phrase of the chorale, emphasizes the purpose of the Creed—“We all believe...” The recurring pedal ostinato represents the Creed which forms the foundation for our faith.

*The Fugue in G Major* is an independent composition likely composed early in Bach’s career in the first decade of the 18th century. The work is nicknamed the “Gigue Fugue” for its pervasive, bouncy, triplet subject and figuration, a characteristic of a popular folk dance of the period. While many composers of the day wrote giges, few can match Bach’s prowess in thematic development, contrapuntal skills, and full integration of the pedals in the four-voice fugue. It is a piece of exuberant joy!

The monumental work, *St. Matthew Passion*, was first performed in 1727 at the Thomaskirche in Leipzig. Bach was well aware of the significance of this piece and continued to revise it in the

1730s and 40s. However, it was never performed again in his lifetime. Not until over 75 years after his death in 1829, did this *Passion* receive a second performance when Felix Mendelssohn organized and conducted an abbreviated performance in Leipzig. It is known that Bach composed four *Passions* during his tenure as Cantor of Leipzig—one for each of the Gospel narratives—but only two (Matthew and John) have survived to the present day.

The aria “*Aus liebe will mein Heiland sterben*” (“Out of love my Savior is willing to die”) appears in the narrative in the chaotic midst of Jesus’ crucifixion. While both sad and ethereal, the piece underlines one of the central themes of the passion: that Jesus Christ died for the love of us all. Greg Anderson captures this sentiment well in his fitting arrangement for two keyboards.

*The Concerto in A Major* is known to us today as a concerto for harpsichord and orchestra. Most scholars surmise that this piece is a reworking of a concerto for oboe and orchestra written several years earlier. Much of Bach’s instrumental music, sonatas, concertos, orchestral suites, and the like, were likely composed while he was serving as director of the music for the court in Cöthen. There, he had no church music responsibilities. When Bach moved to Leipzig, he eventually also assumed the role as director of the town’s Collegium Musicum, a chamber ensemble that performed for civic functions and in coffee houses throughout the area. Many of his chamber pieces written for the court in Cöthen were utilized, rewritten or rearranged for use in Leipzig. In today’s performance in an arrangement for two keyboards, the organ plays the part Bach wrote for the harpsichord, while the piano renders the orchestral music.

The final piece on today’s program, the *Prelude and Fugue in E Minor*, is among a handful of large-scale preludes and fugues likely written late in Bach’s career in Leipzig. Both the Prelude and Fugue incorporate elements of the Italian concerto style, learned early on in his career, yet now utilized in a much more developed and sophisticated manner. In the Prelude, grandiose dance gestures and descending scale figures alternate with slightly thinner textured, ascending dotted-rhythmic figures—the contrast of orchestral sections and solo sections. In the fugue, the sectional contrast is more apparent with strict contrapuntal writing alternating with passaggio flourishes. The work acquired the nickname, “the Wedge,” based upon the shape of the fugue subject. It begins with half-step motion, then rocking back and forth with 3rds, 4ths, 6ths expanding to the octave before returning back to its original starting pitch thereby creating a musical “wedge” shape. The overall effect of the two movements is one of vastness, marked by grandiose gestures, sweeping lines, and a consummate composer at the zenith of his career.