David Boos was born in Vienna. He studied organ there and in Amsterdam where he still has close connections. The title page of Bach’s Dritter Theil in English reads thus: “Third Part of Keyboard Practice, consisting of various preludes on the Catechism and other hymns for the organ prepared for music-lovers and particularly for connoisseurs of such work, for the recreation of the spirit by Johann Sebastien Bach, Royal Polish and Electoral Saxon Court composer, Capellmeister and director of the chorus musicus, Leipsig. Published by the author.

Sometimes referred to as The German Organ Mass, the Dritter Theil begins with a Prelude and ends with a celebrated five voice Fugue both in the key of E flat. Between these magnificent opening and closing flourishes of keyboard splendour are twenty one Chorale Preludes of which David Boos made an inspired choice of ten. These are inspired by important liturgical texts including Kyries, The 10 Commandments, The Lord’s Prayer and The Eucharist to mention but a few.

Thursday’s performance by David Boos was absolutely brilliant. It demonstrated the astonishing sound diversity of which Bach as a composer for organ was capable. Boos chose combinations of organ registrations which enhanced the shapes, textures and moods or emotions written into the music by Bach. Counterpoints sounded with astonishing clarity. Sometimes the most surprising and delightful voices would suddenly emerge out of the counterpoint highlighting a particularly beautiful line of melody and then running with it. Rhythm was a key element in so many of the pieces – sometimes seeming to lead in a kind of dance and making us in the audience go all the way along with it.

I will not mention every one of the twelve items in Thursday’s performance although each one deserves its own paean of praise. This would end up as a repetitive and not very inspiring list. Let me however mention just one or two particularly high points in Thursday’s recital.

The opening Prelude for full organ sounded majestic with the Aubertin at full voice. It was expansive, suggesting an opening processional with dignitaries entering the Church in magnificent costumes. The final Fuga a 5 also in the key of E flat thus recalling the opening could have been a Sortie sending us joyfully on our way. David Boos made the Aubertin sing out as if inspired by the Trinity on which Bach based this music.

In several of the pieces a colour blend of flute stops was cut through by an edgy reed sound which allowed a particular line of melody to take charge of the music. In the Chorale Prelude Allein Gott in der Höh BWV 676, busy flutes led rhythmically delightful dancing – a splendid contrast with some of the richer or more thoughtful pieces.

Rhythm was king also in the Lord’s Prayer section Vater unser im Himmelreich BWV 682. It began with a solo flute then so many other organ voices were made to join in the prayer. Irregular rhythmic patterns gave the music an almost hypnotic driving force.
The following piece Christ unser Herr zum Iordan kam BWV 684 dealing with Baptism used rich full organ with magnificent bass suggesting both glory and mystery. Iesus Christus unser Heyland BWV 688 had the most playful pointillist flute with a reed melody singing out below and with this fascinating sound blend we were led into the final Fugue, a glorious conclusion to an utterly spellbinding performance of some of the best organ music ever composed.