

E. Power Biggs Soler & Bach

Edward George Power Biggs (March 29, 1906 — March 10, 1977), more familiarly known as E. Power Biggs, was a British-born American concert organist and recording artist. Biggs was trained in London at the Royal Academy of Music, where he studied with G.D. Cunningham. Biggs emigrated to the United States in 1930. In 1932, he took up a post at Christ Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he lived for the rest of his life.

Biggs did much to bring the classical pipe organ back to prominence, and was in the forefront of the mid-20th-century resurgence of interest in the organ music of pre-Romantic composers. On his first concert tour of Europe, in 1954, Biggs performed and recorded works of Johann Sebastian Bach, Sweelinck, Dieterich Buxtehude, and Pachelbel on historic organs associated with those composers. Thereafter, he believed that such music should ideally be performed on instruments representative of that period and that organ music of that epoch should be played by using (as closely as possible) the styles and registrations of that era. Thus, he sparked the American revival of organ building in the style of European Baroque instruments, seen especially in the increasing popularity of tracker organs — analogous to Europe's Orgelbewegung.

Among other instruments, Biggs championed G. Donald Harrison's Baroque-style unenclosed, uncranked instrument with 24 stops and electric action (produced by Aeolian-Solmer in 1937 and installed in Harvard's Busch-Reisinger Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts), and the three-manual Plentrop tracker organ subsequently installed there in 1958. Many of his CBS radio broadcasts and Columbia recordings were made in the museum. Another remarkable instrument used by Biggs was the Challis pedal harpsichord; Biggs made recordings of the music of J.S. Bach and Scott Joplin on this instrument.

His critics of the time included rival concert organist Virgil Fox, who was known for a more flamboyant, colorful style of performance. Fox decried Biggs' insistence on historical accuracy, claiming it was "relegating the organ to a museum piece." However, most observers agree that Biggs "should be given great credit for his innovative ideas as far as the musical material he recorded, and for making the organs he recorded even more famous." Despite different approaches, both artists enjoyed hugely successful careers and Biggs rose to the top of his profession. In addition to concertizing and recording, Biggs taught at the Longy School of Music in Cambridge, Massachusetts, at various times in his career and edited a large body of organ music.

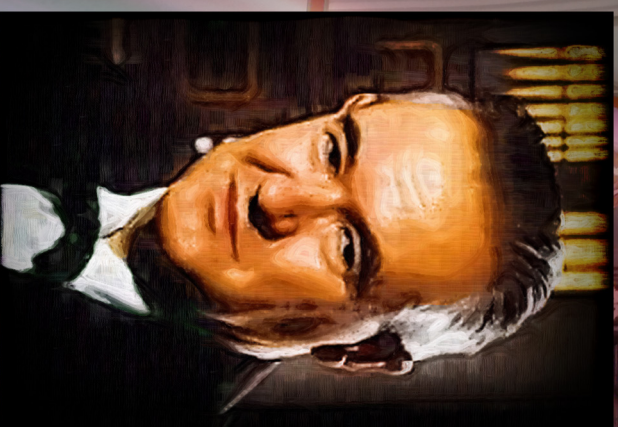
Notes from Wikipedia

Transfer notes

The stereo Soler concerto recordings were transferred from a near-mint US Columbia pressing sent to Philips in Europe as a sample for possible licensing, whilst the Bach came from a near-mint Philips white-label test pressing. Whilst the Soler was clearly well recorded, and makes excellent use of the stereo process - a rare example where the novel effect of spacing two instruments widely apart actually works - the Bach (who probably didn't actually write the works in question himself) was far more problematic. The recordings were made by Power Biggs himself, using portable equipment brought over from the US in a series of European churches which presented all sorts of voltage and AC current problems for the intrepid organist to solve. Although he made a reasonably good go of converting, for example at one church, 165V at 50 Hz to 110V at 60 Hz, the results were most definitely variable; pitches were less than stable or accurate, and a wide variety of induced electrical hum frequencies were recorded. Fortunately all of these issues are now resolvable, and the judicious application of Ambient Stereo processing coupled with convolution reverbization gives a sense of real space and presence to these older mono recordings. **AR**

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM
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E. Power Biggs



Soler
Six concertos
for Two Organs
with Daniel Pinkham

Bach
Eight Little Preludes
& Fugues BWV553-650

Studio & location recordings
1959 & 1955

PRISTINE
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SOLER CONCERTOS FOR TWO ORGANS

BACH EIGHT LITTLE PRELUDES AND FUGUES

E. POWER BIGGS

E. Power Biggs Soler & Bach

SOLER Six Concertos for Two Organs*

1

Concerto No. 1 in C major - 1st mvt. - Andante (2:37)

2

2nd mvt. - Minuet and Four Variations (3:00)

3

Concerto No. 2 in A minor - 1st mvt. - Andante (3:03)

4

2nd mvt. - Allegro (2:06)

5

3rd mvt. - Minuet (6:17)

6

Concerto No. 3 in G major - 1st mvt. - Andantino (2:43)

7

2nd mvt. - Minuet and Six Variations (4:42)

8

Concerto No. 4 in F major - 1st mvt. - Affettuoso - Andante non Largo (1:46)

9

2nd mvt. - Minuet and Four Variations (3:32)

10

Concerto No. 5 in A major - 1st mvt. - Cantabile (2:44)

11

2nd mvt. - Minuet and Seven Variations (5:20)

12

Concerto No. 6 in D major - 1st mvt. - Allegro - Andante - Allegro - Andante (4:44)

13

2nd mvt. - Minuet and Four Variations (4:33)

"In this recording Mr. Biggs' Flentrop is heard on the left and Mr. Pinkham's Hess on the right"

BACH Eight Little Preludes and Fugues

14

Prelude and Fugue No. 1 in C major, BWV 553 (3:53) (Silbermann organ at Ebersmunster, Alsace)

15

Prelude and Fugue No. 2 in D minor, BWV 554 (4:00) (St. Jacobi Church at Lübeck, Germany)

16

Prelude and Fugue No. 3 in E minor, BWV 555 (4:29) (Pilgrimage Church at Absam, Austria)

17

Prelude and Fugue No. 4 in F major, BWV 556 (2:56) (Prescher organ at Monchsdeggingen, Germany)

18

Prelude and Fugue No. 5 in G major, BWV 557 (4:02) (Gabler organ at Ochsenhausen, Germany)

19

Prelude and Fugue No. 6 in G minor, BWV 558 (4:05) (Moreau organ at Gouda, Holland)

20

Prelude and Fugue No. 7 in A minor, BWV 559 (3:07) (Schnitger organ at Neuenfelde, Germany)

21

Prelude and Fugue No. 8 in B flat major, BWV 560 (4:01) (St. Johannis Church at Luneburg, Germany)

E. Power Biggs, *Daniel Pinkham organ

COMPACT
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DIGITAL AUDIO

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XR remastering by
Andrew Rose

Transfers from Columbia
MS 6208 (Soler) and
Philips ABL 3186 white
label test pressing (Bach)

Cover artwork based on
photographs of E Power
Biggs and the organ of St.
Johannis Church, Luneberg

Soler Concertos
Recorded 30 March 1959
Busch-Reisinger Museum,
Harvard University

Bach Preludes & Fugues
Recorded 1954 & 1955

Total duration: 77:40

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SOLER CONCERTOS FOR TWO ORGANS

BACH EIGHT LITTLE PRELUDES AND FUGUES

E. POWER BIGGS