



Because of these characteristics, and the astounding quality of the composition, it has become strongly associated with horror and villainy and become most famous, often considered the most famous organ composition, during its lifetime.

Long ago (around the early 1700's) in a distant land (Germany), a composition was written for an instrument of unparalleled power and complexity (the organ) by a genius of significant magnitude and popularity (Johanne Sebastian Bach). This piece is known as Toccata and Fugue in D minor BWV 565. A Toccata, translated from Italian, literally means "to touch" and is know as a piece of music with challenging and virtuosic passages with the intent to show off the performer's keyboard ability. A fugue is a piece of music with a main theme entering in different voices, staggered throughout the composition. Put them together like Bach did many times over and you have a monster of a piece of music. Why, though, is BWV 565 so famous?

This toccata and fugue has an extremely eerie theme and finds itself winding and twisting through the key of d minor. Minor keys usually have a somber and more grim tone than major keys. Some have placed the piece, rather, in d Dorian mode instead of d minor which can give it a brighter sound than one would find in the usual minor key. Because of these characteristics, and the astounding quality of the composition, it has become strongly associated with horror and villainy and become most famous, often considered the most famous organ composition, during its lifetime.



It was first transcribed for piano by Carl Tausig in the mid 1800s. It was transcribed by others as well and even for different non-keyboard instruments such as an orchestra; I have even heard a version for two bass clarinets! At this point in time, I would bet you could find the sheet music for it anywhere, for any instrument or group of instruments.

BWV 565 was boosted significantly in popularity when it was included as an orchestral version in the 1940s release of Disney's *Fantasia*. Disney used dramatic lighting, colors, and camera angles to showcase the piece. After Disney's original release of the film, it was not sure that the presentation of the piece was appropriate and cut it completely from the 1942 theatrical release of the film. Disney changed its mind again in 1946 and re-released the film, this time including the original version of the piece and it has been included ever since.

At this point in time, I would bet you could find the sheet music for it anywhere, for any instrument or group of instruments.

As much as Disney helped promote BWV 565, it was certainly not the only exposition the piece received. It first popped up in a 1931 film adaptation of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. It was played by Captain Nemo in the 1954 film *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* just before his submarine, the Nautilus, attacked a ship, unprovoked. It is heard again in the 1962 film adaptation of *The Phantom of the Opera* to engage the audience in a feeling of suspense and discomfort.