

Go Bach to Sleep

– A Moment of Rest in Music

**A relaxing listening experience for the organ and its related keyboards,
meticulously crafted to make the world of organs accessible – a world of
tactile passion and new sounds!**

We introduce Go Bach to Sleep, a national Swedish organ culture outreach initiative, developed under the leadership of Jon Liinason, and overseen by the Göteborg International Organ Academy. This endeavor is made possible through the generous support of the region Västra Götaland and the Church of Sweden, conducted within the framework of Organister i framkant.

PROJECT PURPOSES

GO BACH TO SLEEP has the following basic purposes:

- To lower the thresholds to the fantastic organ world of tactile passion and new sounds.
- To find new audiences for organ music events.

- To offer an opportunity for rest, where new sounds and reflection work together for increased well-being.
- To increase the feeling of the power of music for rejuvenation.
- To offer a musical meeting forum where the focus is on listening inwardly, with the help of softly registered organ music being performed in a warm, candlelit environment, imbued with concern for the well being of the audience. And with an encouragement to share experiences and reflections about life and music after the organ music event.
- To connect the organ to its related keyboard instrument and thereby creating a contrasting organ relief effect.
- To offer music creation where the musician does not have to choose a repertoire of a certain level, in order to assert him- or herself .
- To shift the focus from the musician's performance, to the music, and to how it is received by the audience.
- To reduce the requirements musicians normally have to relate to in concert programming, when it comes to variation, contrast, etc., which are much less evident within the boundaries of this concept.
- To offer an increased focus on letting the music communicate in itself, with itself, and to offer a counterweight to the constant worry of our age about things being boring or taking too long - "the 15 second rule" or "the street music aesthetic" (catch people before they leave), which does not apply here.
- To collaborate nationally and internationally in the development of new formats for organ music events.
- To offer an opportunity to listen to Bach's music in the warmest and most undemanding of circumstances.

BASIC INFO

Organ event at 17:45–19:30 on a Sunday evening of the month.

Go Bach to Sleep is part of the project *Orgelvision i Väst* (West Sweden Organ Vision), which is financed by the Västra Götaland region, under the auspices of the Göteborg International Organ Academy: <https://www.organacademy.se/orgelvision-vast>

The concept has been developed by Jon Liinason.

More info: <https://www.organacademy.org/go-bach-to-sleep>

EVENT FORMAT

Half- dimmed lighting in the hall, lit candles.

Blankets, woolen socks and pillows are distributed by the music hosts to all visitors, with the following instructions:

"Welcome to Go Bach to Sleep, a moment of rest in music. Please take off your shoes and outerwear and put on these woolen socks, wrap yourself in this blanket and use this pillow as support for the duration of your time here. You can lie down in the pews if you want. Feel free to applaud afterwards, but only after the event, so you don't wake anyone up."

The event consists of a prelude followed by three main sections that go from semi dark, to pitch dark in the hall, using only candles, on to brighter and brighter lighting (but not brighter than half-lit halls) and ending with a conversational postlude in the foyer, where visitors are offered hot chocolate and hot drinks, wrapped in their blankets and woolen socks. The occasion is rounded off with a change of clothes and return of blankets, socks and pillows.

The music is presented from the meditatively dull to the open bright.

The repertoire selection is freely chosen, based on the following parameters:

- Emphasis on the works of J. S. Bach, with occasional excursions to his contemporaries, with a focus on quiet, transparent interpretations that offer the possibility of slumber and sleep, dreaming and slowly waking up.

To help you choose your repertoire and interpretation, consider the following as a musician:

- **Prelude:** This prelude or fugue from J. S. Bach's *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier* should give the audience an opportunity for silence and collection.
- **Section 1:** This work, in this interpretation, should be able to fall asleep to.
- **Section 2:** This work, in this interpretation, should be something one can dream about.
- **Section 3:** This work, in this interpretation, should be able to slowly wake up to.
- **Conversation Postlude:** This setting should promote casual small talk and free conversation. Encourage those who wish to share their personal reflections from the event.

Dress smart and do not hesitate to wink at the early 18th century. It means a lot for the audience that you are smartly, still comfortably, dressed.

(17:45-18:00)

Prelude

Half-dimmed lighting in the hall, lit candles.

As the audience arrives, any prelude or fugue from *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier* is being played, over and over again, on a muted grand piano, a lute-registered harpsichord, clavichord or any other soft keyboard instrument (preferably not the organ).

The audience is welcomed by two hosts and briefly introduced to the rest and listening organ concept *Go Bach to Sleep*.

(18.00-18.20)

Section 1 of 3

Half-dimmed lighting in the hall, lit candles.

You, the musician, (i.e. not a priest or other church official, who can however come in at the end of section 3, see below) welcomes the audience softly (microphone can be used if needed), presents the layout of the evening and tells the audience that this is a chance for rest after a long week. A possibility of rounding things off.

Tell the audience that the evening has three short listening sections (not including the opening prelude they just heard or the final conversation postlude).

Explain that each session begins with a short reflection question that you as musician will offer them, to ponder upon while resting and listening.

Reflection question section 1, eg:

"What do you need, right now? What have you needed? What will you be needing? What do you need most of all in life, right now?"

Here, you can freely use these questions or use your own reflection questions of an open nature.

The music in this section is played on a softly registered organ.

The section ends with a piece on a related keyboard instrument, as the electric lights are simultaneously being increased a bit.

After finishing this section, you present the next reflection question.

(18:20-18:40)

Section 2 of 3

Lights completely off in the hall, lit candles.

Reflection question section 2, eg:

"What does your friend need in life, right now? What has your friend needed? What will your friend be needing? What does your friend need most of all in life, right now?"

Here, you can freely use these questions or use your own reflection questions of an open nature.

The music in this section is played on a relatively softly registered organ.

The section ends with a piece on a related keyboard instrument, as the electric lights are simultaneously being increased a bit.

After finishing this section, you present the next reflection question.

(18:40-19:00)

Section 3 out of 3

Half-dimmed lighting in the hall, lit candles.

Reflection question section 3, eg:

"What do you and your friend need to do now, together, now that you know of each others' needs?"

Here, you can freely use these questions or use your own reflection questions of an open nature.

The music in this section is played on a relatively softly registered organ.

The section ends with a piece on a related keyboard instrument, as the electric lights are simultaneously being increased to half-full.

You get up from the organ and thank the audience for participating in *Go Bach to Sleep - A Moment of Rest in Music*.

Applause

At this point there is a short window of opportunity for either a priest or other church official to thank the audience for participating, and possibly present the next occasion of *Go Bach to Sleep*, or other music or concert related information they may find relevant for the audience to hear of.

(19:00-19:30)

Conversation postlude

You invite the audience to a cup of hot chocolate and hot drinks in the foyer, or a suitable place, maybe in the chancel, where a good number of chairs are arranged in a circle. Encourage visitors to keep woolen socks and blankets on. Avoid using words like “reflection, meditation, sharing”, etc., rather, simply invite them for a cup of hot chocolate. Since the visitors are sitting in a circle, questions often come to you, from the audience, spontaneously. Otherwise, you may share how you experienced this session of performing *Go Bach to Sleep*. And maybe ask what the audience thought of it all? Many great conversations take place within the realms of an open, unforced format, and usually do not require any special moderation. Should any single audience member choose to take up a lot of space for conversation, you can carefully shift the focus to others by asking, "Are there others who have questions or reflections?".

After the chocolate and hot drinks have been enjoyed, those audience members who want to come to/up to the organ are welcome to look at the pieces played in the programme and maybe learn more on registrations, hear an explanation of repertoire choices, or any formulate other questions concerning the organ. This applies to the related keyboard instruments, as well, which often arouse great curiosity in audiences. Take plenty of time to answer questions and listen to the audience's anecdotes. Tell maybe a little bit about yourself, if it feels natural, and your journey into music.

After this, visitors are invited to return blankets, pillows and woolen socks and put on their shoes and outerwear, before leaving the premises.

In the foyer you will have made sure there is a guest book entitled *Go Bach to Sleep*, where all audience members who so desire can write down (anonymously if wanted) their reflections. It is important that this part must be voluntary. With this goal in mind, do not speak about the guest book. Rather, just leave it in a visible spot, preferably close to a chair and table, so that visitors feel safe to sit down and write in the guestbook. On the first page you may write:

“Thank you for visiting us tonight and participating in Go Bach to Sleep – A Moment of Rest in Music, a regional rest and listening outreach concept for the organ and its related keyboard instruments. This concept is offered in a series of gatherings as part of an effort to strengthening the region's organ culture. If you want to, you can here (anonymously if you wish) share your reflections from the event.”

REGIONAL & NATIONAL SUPPORT

The rest and listening organ outreach concept *Go Bach to Sleep – A Moment of Rest* is a regional organ culture initiative with the support of the Västra Götaland region in Sweden, under the project management of Göteborg International Organ Academy, and the regional congregations are encouraged to use the concept in their music programmes. *Go Bach to Sleep* is also endorsed

on a national level by the Church of Sweden via the project “Organister i framkant” (*Organists at the Forefront*) www.svenskakyrkan.se/organister-i-framkant

MARKETING

Use your digital channels to your advantage, and create an ad with the following text, paired with a picture of the musician at the organ:

“Please share, and spread the word :)

Go Bach to Sleep

There will be woolen socks, blankets and pillows for everyone.

A moment of rest and listening in three short sections in a candle lit hall.

A moment for you who want to relax, rest and maybe even doze off, lying down in the pews.

You will hear a selection of J. S. Bach's most beautiful works, performed on softly registered organ and its related keyboard instruments. A warm welcome!"

Sponsor the ad with SEK 1000 and specify the desired target group, and you will find that the outreach of the *Go Bach to Sleep* concept will probably be very good.

Example:



PROGRAM SHEET

The program sheet, which is decorated with the same picture of the musician at the organ as the advertisement on the FB page (see above), is distributed *after* the concert, not before. The aim is to have the audience focus on inner listening, resting in music and to avoid the traditional focus on what music, exactly, is being played. It will suffice for the audience to know that there will be good music and that the music performed is composed by J. S. Bach and his contemporaries. This is why the program sheet is handed out only after the event. The audience hosts can explain this if anyone is wondering, prior to the event.

REFLECTIONS

As stated by musicians who have performed *Go Bach to Sleep*:

Visitor reactions in Lundby New Church on February 24, 2019, at 19:00, after Jon Liinason performed the *Go Bach to Sleep* concept for the first time, at the choir organ and at a felt muffled grand piano.

57 visitors, most of whom thanked the musician personally, with warm words and encouragement regarding the rest and listening organ outreach concept *Go Bach to Sleep*. Most of the visitors stayed in the foyer for spontaneous conversations about life and music afterwards. A mood of closure and a quiet rounding off of the past week, preparing for the next to come.

PUBLIC VOICES

From the first occasion for this concept in Lundby New Church 24 February 2019:

- *"It was so nice to lie down, wrapped in a blanket, wearing warm woolen socks, and being swept along by the beautiful music."*
- *"Incredibly nice to be able to listen to music, without that fault finding mode, where you are just waiting for when the musician is going to play a wrong note. Here the focus was on completely different things; to listen inwardly to what I need in life, to what my friend needs and to what we need to do together."*
- *"Thank you, I REALLY needed this! I feel reflected - by my own self!"*
- *"I came because they advertised a Bach programme and because one was allowed to lie down in the pews. Something one usually does not get to do very often!"*
- *"I usually have some difficulties with meditation exercises, but the questions you offered at the beginning of each section were very soft and open. I was immediately struck by a lot of exciting thoughts!"*
- *"Oh, when is the next opportunity? I want to be a part of this again!"*

COMMENTS

Published in the *Go Bach to Sleep* Facebook event before the event:

- "It sounds absolutely wonderful! Obviously I will be in the wrong place on Sunday though, but maybe there will be more events?"*
- "Sounds great Jon!! Too bad I can't make it, but let me know if you do this again <3"*
- "Where can I buy tickets?"*
- "What a wonderful invitation!"*
- "This is just so cozy! Noted! I will try to make it!"*
- "It sounds like sweet music to my ears <3"*
- "Oh nice... I am at home with the children then, so next time <3 <3 <3"*

Andreas Edlund, Lundby New Church, who performed *Go Bach to Sleep* on Sunday, May 12, 2019 at 18:00, at the choir organ and at the clavichord.

There are exciting implications to the concept that directly affect my role as musician.

- I don't need to choose repertoire that has a certain "level" to assert myself.
- A focus shift from my performance to the music and how it was received by the audience.
- The requirements you normally have in concert programming for variation, contrast, etc. are not at all the same here.
- Perhaps here, there is an increased focus on letting the music communicate in itself, with itself.

- A counterbalance to the constant worry of our time about things being boring or taking too long - the “15 second rule” or “the street music aesthetic” (catch people before they pass) does not apply here.

The consequences can both be experienced as an asset and as a threat. But everything that comes from the ego is probably developing. Of course, I see more assets than threats, maybe that's a strong word. BUT - the question revolves around the professional identity of the musician. To put it bluntly, one can say that with this concept, it is not at all certain that a more skilled instrumentalist will do a better job than a happy amateur.

That's not the point, however, anyway.

And then even bigger questions are raised.

Ulrika Davidsson, Älvsborg Church & Björkö Island Church, who performed *Go Back to Sleep* on September 14–15, 2019, at the organ, at the harpsichord and at the clavichord.

Yes, it was a bit magical in Björkö Church, actually. The audience dropped in before 6 p.m., and the pews were filled. Most lay down, a few sat, one lay on a yoga mat on the floor. It became incredibly intimate in this small room. A stillness that was almost physical. It felt very special. A very special community. A lady wrote to me afterward, saying that this was the most rewarding event in Björkö Church that she had ever visited, having lived on the island for over 60 years.

I got many comments about this being extremely appreciated. Several people commented on the harpsichord soundscape. Many people probably never hear that instrument...

Not so many stopped for hot chocolate, but I managed to talk to people as they made their way back out. Inquiries about the next occasion already...

Lars Storm, Christinae Church in Alingsås, who performed *Go Back to Sleep* on Wednesday December 9, 2019 at the great organ (via the choir organ) and at the grand piano:

First of all, it was greatly appreciated. A very nice way to foster a new concert audience. 30 visitors, many of whom I had not seen before, so it was obviously an attractive concept. The whole event was a nice combination of prelude, listening and postlude-section with hot chocolate and conversation.

I performed *Go Bach to Sleep* in three sections of 15 minutes each.

I felt that there was very concentrated listening going on in the room.

It was very good that there were three clear sections in the programme. A very didactic way for the audience to understand where in the concert they were.

I played the piano and the organ, and it was a nice signal before shifts 2 and 3 that I switched from the organ to the piano. A clear divider preceding the next section.

We advertised the event in the newspapers, but didn't really have the time and energy to be active on social media this time.

The internal reactions, when I presented the idea of performing a *Go Bach to Sleep*-event to colleagues, were marked by curiosity; everyone thought it sounded like a really exciting concept. Undivided positivity.

We've hosted *Organ Massage*-events before, but it's been more controversial; bordering on the misconceived. There were difficulties with physical touch. *Go Bach to Sleep* was considerably more harmless.

What was really nice, as there was nothing else going on in the room, other than listening, was that concentration was so intense. What with lying in the pews, audiences members were partially shielded from each other, which contributed to higher levels of concentration in listening, I think. Eyes on the ceiling.

I thought it was very positive to hear, from visitors afterward, that they received an impulse for their own reflections, via my introductory questions preceding each individual section.

The concept was completely undemanding, and the church room contributed something very special to the atmosphere, which was positive.

As a musician, I really appreciate all times where the audience ends up listening intensely; it stimulates me to make music. Here I felt that they really listened to *every note*, which was very positive.

We will perform this again, after New Year. We have to do it while it is still dark, in wintertime. We think it is very important that it happens during the dark season. It does not feel as relevant on a summer evening.

Go Bach to Sleep should be done continuously, to signal that we as congregation are working to reach new audiences and new people. It is the church's own breath. To reach out and break boundaries, yes, that is part of the mission of the church musician. There is a great deal of agreement here. It is important to build an infrastructure over time; to build community.

Lowering the thresholds will be a win-win for the congregation and the entire cultural life in the region. After a *Go Bach to Sleep*-event, the threshold is lowered for visiting the concert hall as well.

My reflection for organists who are thinking about performing a *Go Bach to Sleep*-event, is that the concept is very easy to produce, since the quiet music and the funeral repertoire are already in place, you can easily pick music from eg. the *Lux Aeterna* collection.

For me it was a positive artistic challenge to limit myself to Bach. When I decided which repertoire to play, I chose mainly based on thoughts about creating a balance between pieces with cantus firmus / chordal and alternations between minor / major. Overall, I kept a subdued dynamic, except in the last section where I concentrated precisely on cantus firmus, so that the visitors could listen for a melody; nice to wake up to.

It is really important that the audience should be able to fall asleep in the pews, for real. It's okay to fall asleep here in our church room. I think that is very inclusive. And a real playing down of the normal concert situation.

NATIONAL RESPONSE

The national response to *Go Bach to Sleep* from church musicians across Sweden was notably rapid. Interested by the concept and its potential to engage new audiences, church musicians throughout the country began organizing their own *Go Bach to Sleep* events, each with unique local touches.

Within five years, over 200 such events were held, firmly establishing *Go Bach to Sleep* as a recognized and appreciated approach to experiencing organ music in a relaxed and contemplative setting.