



CHANNEL CLASSICS

CCS 14498



Sonatas & Partitas vol.2

Rachel Podger

baroque violin

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)

Partitas and Sonatas for Violin Solo, vol. 2

Rachel Podger, baroque violin

Pesarinius, Genoa 1739



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Partita nr. 3 in E major BWV 1006

1	Preludio	3.42
2	Loure	4.08
3	Gavotte & Rondeau	2.40
4	Menuet I, II	5.22
5	Bourrée	1.25
6	Giga	2.05

Sonata nr. 2 in A minor BWV 1003

7	Grave	3.53
8	Fuga	8.32
9	Andante	4.49
10	Allegro	6.00

Sonata nr. 3 in C major BWV 1005

11	Adagio	4.17
12	Fuga	9.49
13	Largo	3.18
14	Allegro Assai	5.01

Total Time

66.00

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Production & Distribution

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Rachel Podger was born in England and was educated in Germany at a Rudolf Steiner School. She returned to England to continue her violin studies, first with Perry Hart and then at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with Michaela Combetti and David Takeno. During her five years there she developed a keen interest in baroque performance practice and found herself increasingly in demand with established period instrument ensembles in London such as the New London Consort, the Gabrieli Players, London Baroque and Florilegium of whom she is a founder member. However, much of her time now is spent playing 17th and 18th century music with The Palladian Ensemble which she also help to found.

In 1997 Rachel was invited by Trevor Pinnock to join the English Concert with whom she now enjoys a busy schedule as leader of the orchestra and concerto soloist. She plays a violin by Pesarinius from Genoa, made in 1739.

This cd is dedicated to David Takeno.

ON PLAYING BACH...

By listening to Bach first thing in the morning I'm very likely to start the day in good spirits; the clarity of the music both having an invigorating and calming effect on me. Every note and expression has its rightful place and nothing ever seems too elaborate or deprived of something or too intense. The music flows with a confidence that balances our intellectual, emotional and spiritual interests.

PLAYING Bach - especially his solo violin music - intensifies this experience. I now have the chance to get to know the music from inside itself. I have to be prepared to immerse myself in the language of it, understand its complexity, search for the meaning in every phrase....and finally come out the other end with something clear and beautiful...a recipe which works well for me and which developed during the past years of playing and practising these masterworks. There are lots of clues along the way helping you identify yourself with the music - structure, counterpoint, harmony, voicing, line, emphasis, articulation, texture, polyphony, elegance, character, colour - all these necessities, qualities and ideals influence the direction you are taking with your interpretation. During this learning process you realize that you are not only searching for an expressive interpretation but you are also in effect working out a balance between three parts you encounter every time you pick up your instrument to play a piece of music - the written music, the instrument and yourself. Finding this balance is exciting! It's a stimulating challenge which fuels heart, mind, soul and spirit.

Having "arrived" at some interpretative decisions (although in a sense you never really arrive anywhere since a human being never feels the same way on two given days and there is ALWAYS more to discover, especially in Bach....) you perform, and believe you are carrying and delivering a sincere message inspired by the depth of this music.

Recording these important works was challenging and fulfilling at the same time. Daunting to have to settle on just one way of playing for the sake of making a record and having to choose takes that limit the listener to just one way of playing - but then also completely inspiring as I had the freedom to play and play and play (thanks to Channel Classics!), and had time to experiment, improve, change my mind, get impatient, be delighted, relieved and then at the end so very happy and grateful to Bach for writing this uplifting and heartwarming music.

Rachel Podger

In 1890, one of the most beautiful and valuable autograph manuscripts ever penned by a composer resurfaced from oblivion. The manuscript was dated 1720 and, at the age of 170, was now even of antique value. It should have been a collector's item, but when it was offered for sale to none other than Johannes Brahms, he rejected it, doubting its authenticity. Together with a few others like Felix Mendelssohn and Robert Schumann, he was very well acquainted with the works contained in the manuscript: the Sonatas and Partitas for unaccompanied violin, by J.S. Bach. Brahms himself had transcribed the famous Chaconne from

the Partita in d minor for left hand alone. However, he insisted, if he himself had had to compose Bach's Chaconne for unaccompanied violin, he would have been so excited and shocked that he would have become insane. The history of this manuscript is a good illustration of the state of Bach's music in the 19th century: it was known to a small, select group of connoisseurs, in Germany to be precise, but otherwise it was totally forgotten in the rest of Europe. Until the moment when Mendelssohn and Schumann took them in hand, Bach's solo violin works had been gathering dust for more than a century. The first violinist who dared to perform them in public was Joseph Joachim, a good friend of Brahms. He produced the first modern edition, which appeared in 1908, a year after his death. With this gesture, Joachim began this century's journey of discovery through Bach's inspired solo violin works.

We are accustomed to classify Bach's six solo violin works as chamber music, music for a small number of instruments, a small space or concert hall. That is how they are generally performed today. But it is virtually certain that three of the six works, the three sonatas, were intended for use in the church. Bach's first biographer, Johann Nikolaus Forkel, speaks of this very matter in his 1802 work on the composer. Examples of this include the works recorded on this cd, the Sonatas in A minor, BWV 1003 and in C Major, BWV 1005. Both are laid out as sonatas 'da chiesa' (church sonatas) in four movements, slow-fast, slow-fast.

Partita 3 in E Major, firmly based on the model of the French suite, opens with a Preludio, in contrast to the opening Allemande of the other two partitas. In view of the number of transcriptions of this Preludio made by Bach himself, it must

have been a special favorite. The Loure, a dance originating in Normandy, is next presented by Bach, here in a slow, somewhat introverted version. After the Gavotte en Rondeau and two Minuets, the transparent music of the Gigue forms a delicate close to the Partita.

The opening movement, Grave, of Sonata 2 is rhetorical in style and heavily laden with written-out ornamentation. The world of the following Fugue is a drastic contrast. It is based on a rather dry two-measure theme, initially with a strikingly chromatic counter-subject. The 18th-century critic Johann Mattheson already called attention to the great diversity and naturalness of this Fugue. After an andante in the relative major, C, comes the energetic, almost restless Allegro with its Italianate echo passages.

Sonata 3 in C major has the largest-scale Fugue of all three sonatas. It contains a real treasure-house of contrapuntal inventions. As Bach strides towards an organ-point and we begin to sense the approach of the last measures, he once again presents the material which has already been developed, but now inverted! It is an awe-inspiring tour de force. After a beautiful, radiant Largo, this sonata ends with a dizzying perpetuum mobile. The cumulative power of Sonata 3 is largely due to its perfect succession of sharply contrasting movements.

Clemens Romijn, translation: David Shapero



CCS 12198 J.S.BACH
PARTITAS AND SONATAS FOR VIOLIN SOLO, VOL I

(...) deeply considered performances, highly accomplished in technical terms, and full of musical insights. (...)

BBC Music Magazine

(...) Her D minor Giga is stunning. Altogether a most impressive and rewarding disc.
Gramophone

COLOPHON

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David Louf, Utrecht
Clemens Romijn, Rachel Podger

Technical information

Microphones
Digital converter
Speakersystems
Recording location

Recording dates

Bruel & Kjaer 4003
24 Bit Prism / Genex Recorder
Audiolab & AKG K1000 Headphones
Doopsgezinde Kerk Deventer,
The Netherlands
Dec. '98/April '99

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