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J.S. Bach



Trevor Pinnock | Rachel Podger

The Complete Sonatas for Violin and Obligato Harpsichord

2 CD SET

J.S. Bach (1685 - 1750)

Sonatas for violin and obbligato harpsichord
Sonatas for violin and continuo

Rachel Podger violin | **Trevor Pinnock** harpsichord

* **Jonathan Manson** *viola da gamba*



Volume I

Sonata no. 6 in G major BWV 1019

1	Allegro	3.35
2	Largo	1.50
3	Allegro (cembalo solo)	4.39
4	Adagio	3.41
5	Allegro	3.13

Sonata no. 1 in B minor BWV 1014

6	Adagio	3.43
7	Allegro	2.49
8	Andante	3.13
9	Allegro	3.08

Sonata no. 2 in A major BWV 1015

10	Dolce	3.03
11	Allegro	3.05
12	Andante un poco	3.08
13	Presto	4.08

Sonata no. 3 in E major BWV 1016

14	Adagio	4.11
15	Allegro	2.53
16	Adagio ma non tanto	4.51
17	Allegro	3.48

Continuo Sonata in E minor * BWV 1023

18	[Allegro]	0.59
19	Adagio ma non tanto	3.22
20	Allemanda	3.53
21	Gigue	3.05

Total time 71.30

Volume II

Continuo Sonata in G major * BWV 1021

1	Adagio	3.54
2	Vivace	0.56
3	Largo	2.34
4	Presto	1.20

Sonata no. 4 in C minor BWV 1017

5	Largo	4.12
6	Allegro	4.31
7	Adagio	3.11
8	Allegro	4.36

Sonata no. 5 in F minor BWV 1018

9	[Largo]	7.38
10	Allegro	4.33
11	Adagio	2.38
12	Vivace	2.29

Sonata no. 6 in G major * BWV 1019a

13	Vivace	3.36
14	Largo	1.37
15	Cembalo solo	4.32
16	Adagio	2.15
17	Violino solo e basso l'accompagnato	2.24
18	Presto ab initio repetatur et claudatur	3.38

Cantabile from Sonata no. 6 version 2 BWV 1019a

19	Cantabile ma un poco adagio	6.06
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Total time 67.53

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rachel podger



jonathan manson



trevor pinnock

J.S. Bach

I remember with pleasure the first readings which Rachel and I made of Bach's Sonatas. As we explored the challenges of his three-part contrapuntal writing, and the sonorities of movements with more chordal or arpeggiated keyboard parts, we submitted ourselves to Bach's schooling. Musical architecture, tempo, sonority and balance, phrasing and articulation became points of discussion. Much of the learning lay in the development of a shared musical language which goes beyond words. Those days with Bach laid the foundation for our subsequent chamber music playing and our work within The English Concert.



As musicians we eventually come to accept that we can never fully understand the music of Bach. At times we are so in awe of Bach the composer that we lose sight of the man who performed with musicians such as ourselves. Bach, the flamboyant performer, freely arranged and adapted music and was ever willing to upset the compositional balance of his Fifth Brandenburg Concerto for the sake of including the inspired solo cadenza.

Anyone who has seen examples of Bach's hand will have appreciated its flowing and shapely appearance. Unfortunately these works do not survive in his autograph, although he completed the keyboard part to the earliest source. The rest of this was copied by his nephew, Johann Heinrich Bach. Bach subsequently improved this invaluable source. The later text, which forms the basis of our performances, is presented very clearly in Altnickol's manuscript. In just one or two instances, Rachel has preferred to adopt articulations from the earlier source.

In the case of the 6th Sonata, we have decided to record the earliest and latest versions in their entirety, and also the beguiling 'Cantabile', which appeared in a second permutation of the piece. A fuller explanation of this work's history is outlined in Jonathan Freeman-Attwood's note.

Fifty years after the composition of these sonatas, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach wrote of them to Forkel, Bach's biographer. His attachment to these great works is persuasively expressed and seems as true for us today:

"The Six Sonatas may be reckoned among Bach's first masterpieces in this field. They are throughout fugued; there are also a few canons between the clavier and the violin which are extremely singing and full of character. There are several Adagios among them, which even today could not be composed in a more singing style" (The Bach Reader, ed. David and Mendel).

Trevor Pinnock

Violin Sonatas, BWV1014-19 and Continuo Sonatas, BWV1021/3

Amongst Bach's collection of instrumental works gathered from around 1720, the Six Sonatas for violin and harpsichord vaunt a level of invention which the composer knew would probably encourage later refinement. Irrespective of practical circumstance, Bach was constantly driven by an obsessive sense of self-improvement and inner pride, usually reserved for works by which he imagined *his sui generis* art might ultimately be judged; with such profoundly sophisticated musical ambitions, the finished article would not necessarily be the first to emerge. The Sonatas thus appear in several sources from Bach's tenure in Leipzig, though they suggest strongly 'if not overwhelmingly' that much of the music was conceived in Cöthen. The 6th Sonata has an especially protracted history since it probably remained incomplete before Bach departed Prince Leopold's court in 1723; through various stages of revision, Bach was clearly equivocal about its structure. Hence, performers are faced with alternative solutions alongside Bach's third and most mature creation. All these readings are available in this recording, including a further one with the addition of a viola da gamba in the continuo line. This alternative reading of the first version is borne out by J.H. Bach's title page, which indicates: "Basso per Viola da Gamba accompagnanda, se piacere" ("a bass for accompanying viola da gamba, as it pleases").

The earliest sources for the complete set of Sonatas are the violin and keyboard parts made by Bach's nephew Johann Heinrich Bach in 1725, whilst he attended the Thomasschule. Three of the movements were completed by Bach. Also extant is a copy made by Johann Christoph Altnickol, probably from the mid-1740s. Altnickol was Bach's pupil and son-in-law, and remained a loyal and long-standing copyist, producing valuable volumes of both the French Suites and St Matthew Passion. His source forms the basis of this recording, though for the first version of the 6th Sonata, J.H. Bach's early manuscript (with Bach's own contribution) is used, with its pair of dances: a Courante for solo harpsichord and a duo Gavotte - which Bach recycled for his Partita in E minor, BWV 830. The latter's violin part has been lost, though 'retrieved', here through transcription from the aforementioned Partita.

Whilst it is thought that Bach revised the first five Sonatas on two occasions in Leipzig, with comparatively small alterations, the 6th continued to attract new solutions, notably the addition around 1725 of an extensive 'Cantabile'. This was drawn from a contemporaneous (and now lost) secular cantata which today remains only in the form of the sacred cantata, 'Gott, man lobet dich in der Stille' (BWV 120), the composer's final installation work for the Leipzig Town Council dating from the early 1740s. It may be that the last version of the 6th Sonata dates from this time also: the Cantabile is substituted with a binary harpsichord solo in E minor, a more substantial Adagio is incorporated as well as a new 6/8 Allegro to replace the simple repeat of the opening movement, as it occurs in the early version.

As late as 1774, C.P.E Bach was still championing the Violin Sonatas as the finest works of my dearly beloved father: "they still sound excellent and give me great pleasure". This reveals the extent to which the pieces appear to transcend a bias for current tastes (so often central to Carl Philipp's critical position), at once suggesting a stylistic genre which was easily explicable and assimilated within prevailing Enlightenment emblems. This is evident in the *emfindsamer* gestures in the poignant opening of the mature B minor (which Christoph Wolff is sure belongs to Leipzig, not Cöthen) or the semplice elegance of the slow movement of the E major, following the succinct control of the initial allegro. These conceits can perhaps be understood within Bach's heavily-nuanced vocalisations (though they are decidedly instrumental in constitution), which convey a reflective spirit of supreme diversity.

One should however be under no illusions that Bach's contrapuntal and broad structural instincts are any way compromised: his trios allude to detailed concerto techniques, both structural and textural, which are governed by a close interaction of ritornello and episodic material, as in the first allegro of the A major and throughout the last version of the G major sonata. These Sonatas also represent a compendium of practical *a la mode* instrumental device, inspired by both foreign and indigenous traditions, not least the keyboard figuration in the F minor work, whose florid arpeggiated accompaniment can be seen to grow out of an earlier version, and examples of violin 'bariolage' recalling the great solo violin Chaconne. The A major sonata, for all its pastoral lyricism early on, is a *tour de force* of canonic ingenuity which serves as an undercurrent in the wistful Andante and as a witty and impertinent shadow in the concluding Presto.

As convention would dictate, Bach conceived his 'Sei Sounate a Cembalo certato e Violino Solo' (Six Sonatas for concerted Harpsichord and Violin Solo) in a symmetrical fashion with the keys B minor, A major and E major 'reflected' in C minor, F minor and G major. Following through the six, a pattern emerges where Bach moves down a tone and up a fifth in the first three pieces, and then mirrors it down a fifth and up a tone in the second half. Further rationales and narratives exist in the relationship of thirds between the individual sonatas (b and G, A and f and E and c) and overall modal equilibrium. Given the wealth of *affekt* implied in choice of keys, and realised in the variety of movements, Bach imposes order through juxtaposing his free-wheeling panoply of ideas around the relatively formalised four-movement 'sonata da chiesa'. The significance of all these meticulously arranged features is rendered symbolic in the layered meaning which Bach seeks to communicate to players and listeners alike.

No less telling, and more immediately discernible, is Bach's unique treatment of the duo partners. The concept of 'trio' is firmly embedded in Bach's vision for this set whether or not, as Hans Epstein has suggested, several movements in the collection existed formerly as *bona fide* trio sonatas. As both the J.H. Bach and Altnickol (he calls them 'Sechs Trios fur Clavier und die Violine' - at pains, like C.P.E. Bach, to stress the equality of the players) sources firmly testify, these are trios: works where the harpsichord serves a dual function as fundamental

bass and sparring partner with the violin solo. The configurations and prodigiously varied discourse are what make these works as distinctive in dialogue as any such trios before Haydn, or the equivalent violin and keyboard sonatas by Mozart and Beethoven. If for no other reasons, both Bach and Mozart adopt a policy where the keyboard can at one moment discretely sustain and the other dominate the fabric with an unshamed prominence and virtuosity.

Other than the so-called 'obligato' sonatas, only two sonatas by Bach exist for the more conventional 'solo and continuo' idiom. The Sonata in G major, BWV 1021, survives in a source copied by Anna Magdalena around 1733. Bach evidently saw the continuo line, which is richly figured by Bach himself, as particularly useful to pupils as it appears in two contemporary instructional sources. What surely no pupil could fashion above it is a violin line of such consummate breadth and nobility in both slow movements, or vibrant quasi-partnership in the brief allegros. The E minor Sonata is a more integrated, single-keyed creation in which a fiery toccata sustains its extemporised spirit in an adagio of fluid chromatic inflection. Two dance movements, an allemande and gigue, provide a gracious 'da camera' conclusion.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

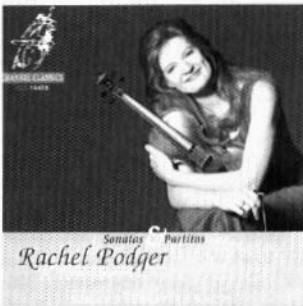
Rachel Podger

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<i>Technical information</i>	
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Recording location	St. Martin's Church, East Woodhay, UK
Recording dates	June, August 2000

Instruments (pitch a' = 415)

Violin: Pesarinius, Genoa 1739

Harpichord: David J. Way, 1982 after Hensch

Viola da gamba: Curtis Bryant, Watertown, Massachusetts, U.S.A., 1978

discography

solo

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