

HEIFETZ PLAYS BACH

SONATAS AND PARTITAS FOR SOLO VIOLIN



The **Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin (BWV 1001–1006)** are a set of six works composed by Johann Sebastian Bach. They consist of three sonatas da chiesa, in four movements, and three partitas, in dance-form movements.

The set was completed by 1720, but was only published in 1802 by Nicolaus Simrock in Bonn. Even after publication, it was largely ignored until the celebrated violinist Josef Joachim started performing these works. Today, Bach's Sonatas and Partitas are an essential part of the violin repertoire, and they are frequently performed and recorded. The *Sei Solo* – a *violino senza Basso* accompagnato, as Bach titled them, firmly established the technical capability of the violin as a solo instrument. The pieces often served as an archetype for solo violin pieces for the following generations of composers including Eugène Ysaÿe, Béla Bartók, and Paul Hindemith.

Bach started composing these works around 1703, while at Weimar, and the set was completed by 1720, when Bach was a Kapellmeister in Köthen. He was almost certainly inspired by Johann Paul von Westhoff's partitas for solo violin, for he worked alongside Westhoff at Weimar, and the older composer's pieces share some stylistic similarities to Bach's. Solo violin repertoire was actively growing at the time: Heinrich Ignaz Biber's celebrated solo passacaglia appeared c.1676, Westhoff's collections of solo violin music were published in 1682 and 1696, Johann Joseph Vismayr's *Artificiosus Conventus pro Camera* in 1715, and finally, Johann Georg Pisendel's solo violin sonata was composed around 1716. The tradition of writing for solo violin did not die after Bach, either: Georg Philipp Telemann published 12 *Fantasias* for solo violin in 1735.

The tradition of polyphonic violin writing was already well-developed in Germany, particularly by Biber, Johann Heinrich Schmelzer, and the composers of the so-called Dresden school - Johann Jakob Walther and Westhoff. Bach's Weimar and Köthen periods were particularly suitable times for composition of secular music, for he worked as a court musician. Bach's cello and orchestral suites date from the Köthen period, as well as the famous Brandenburg concertos and many other well-known collections of instrumental music.

It is not known whether Bach's works were performed during his lifetime or, if they were, who the performer was. Johann Georg Pisendel and Jean-Baptiste Volumier, both talented violinists in the Dresden court, have been suggested as possible performers, as was Joseph Speiss, leader of the orchestra in Köthen. Friedrich Wilhelm Rust, who would later become part of the Bach family circle in Leipzig, also became a likely candidate. Bach himself also possibly gave the first performance. According to his son Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, "in his youth, and until the approach of old age, he played the violin cleanly and powerfully".

These notes from Wikipedia.org. Full scores are available at The International Music Score Library Project: <http://imslp.org>

Recording and restoration notes

These recordings, remarkably for a violin player who had such a long and illustrious career, represent the only complete set of Bach's Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin recorded by Heifetz. Prior to the 1952 recordings he made a handful of recordings in 1935 for HMV which appear to have been unissued at the time in favour of Yehudi Menuhin's discs - records suggest some of Heifetz's 1930s EMI Bach recordings finally saw release in the mid-1970s. I have also included his very first recording of any of these works, a 1925 early electric which partnered a short piece by Couperin on a single side of a one-off disc which appeared both in the UK on HMV and in the USA on Victor. The 1952 recording has suffered at the hands of a number of remastering engineers, not least RCA Victor's own - a CD issue of these recordings I've heard can only be described as vile. Hopefully nobody will say the same of this new remastering, which aims to restore a clarity and directness of tone to this wonderful set of performances that has been all-too-often absent elsewhere. **AR**

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

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JASCHA HEIFETZ

PLAYS

J. S. BACH

SONATAS AND PARTITAS FOR SOLO VIOLIN

RECORDED IN 1952 AND 1925

Heifetz plays Bach Solo Sonatas & Partitas

CD1 Sonata No. 1 in G minor BWV 1001

1. Adagio (4:45)
2. Fugue (Allegro) (4:49)
3. Siciliana (4:08)
4. Presto (3:39)

Partita No. 1 in B minor BWV 1002

5. 1. Allemande (4:57)
6. 2. Double (2:24)
7. 3. Courante (2:45)
8. 4. Double (4:03)
9. 5. Sarabande (2:46)
10. 6. Double (1:46)
11. 7. Bourrée (2:55)
12. 8. Double (3:08)

Sonata No. 2 in A minor BWV 1003

13. 1. Grave (3:38)
14. 2. Fugue (6:05)
15. 3. Andante (5:41)
16. 4. Allegro (5:30)

Jascha Heifetz, violin

RECORDING AND ISSUE DETAILS

Recorded 21st October 1952 (Sonata No. 1 & Partita No. 3), 22nd October 1952 (Sonata No. 3), 23rd October 1952 (Partita No. 1), 24th October 1952 (Sonata No. 2, Partita No. 2), RCA Victor Studios, Hollywood, California, USA. First issued as RCA Victor 3 LP set LM 6105.

CD2, Trk 17: Recorded 29th December, 1925, Victor Studios, Camden, New Jersey, USA, issued in the USA as Victor 6564 and in the UK as HMV DB945, Matrix Number CVE 34072.

CD2 Partita No. 2 in D minor BWV 1004

1. Allemande (3:13)
2. Courante (2:45)
3. Sarabande (3:09)
4. Gigue (3:51)
5. Chaconne (13:16)

Sonata No. 3 in C major BWV 1005

6. 1. Adagio (3:52)
7. 2. Fugue (8:46)
8. 3. Largo (2:38)
9. 4. Allegro assai (4:48)

Partita No. 3 in E major BWV 1006

10. 1. Preludio (3:16)
11. 2. Loure (4:13)
12. 3. Gavotte en rondeau (2:44)
13. 4. Menuet I (1:28)
14. 5. Menuet II (2:08)
15. 6. Bourrée (1:26)
16. 7. Gigue (2:02)

17. Menuetts I & II (1925 recording) (2:29)



PACM 075

XR remastering by **Andrew Rose**

Cover artwork based on a photograph of **Jascha Heifetz**

Total duration: **2hr 9:01**

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