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DIGITAL AUDIO
PAKM 063

SAMUIL FEINBERG

J. S. Bach: The Well-Tempered Clavier

Pristine
XR

Classic Review: Fanfare Magazine, 1994

There are very few examples of Feinberg's art available on CD. On LP there was a particularly impressive performance of several Mazurkas by Scriabin, on a rare Melodiya disc, which revealed an incredible intelligence in the way the dance rhythm was applied to Scriabin's harmony. Feinberg (1890-1962) seems to be the only pianist to have decoded this part of Scriabin's oeuvre. The CD's notes mention Feinberg's proximity to the composer through his composition teacher Zhilyaev, and that Scriabin had praised some of Feinberg's performances. Thus the appearance of the entire Well-tempered Clavier is of great interest and curiosity, a rare chance to hear more of this enigmatic artist. From the very first Prelude and Fugue one is immediately confronted with a superior musical intellect whose pianistic mastery is complete. The Preludes are formally shaped, measured by a poetic rendering of their rhythmic stresses. Most unusual is that the tempo adjustments usually given to the Preludes are applied to the Fugues with a dramatic use of ritardandi and strong outlining of the phrases. There is extraordinary polyphonic clarity: Feinberg boldly voices the fugues so that all the activity of the subject, countersubject, and transitional material become operative and transparent. He seems to avoid the pedal while displaying a great variety of touch and a judicious choice of tempos which enliven the music. In proceeding from one Prelude and Fugue to the next one encounters a fresh and compelling presentation of each work. Many are memorable: in Book I, the G-Major Prelude has a brisk pace in which the pianist is better able to have the asymmetric phrases clash with one another. The final B-Minor prelude of the same book has the basso continuo line re-enforced by octaves on some repeats. Feinberg was said to have been highly influenced by Busoni and this may be due to that contact, as Busoni had contributed significantly to Russian musical life before 1918.

Pianists born after the turn of the century who remained in Russia often developed a harsh percussive sound as their fundamental touch in which lyrical playing, when it occurs, sounds out of context. Feinberg represents the refinement of the Russian artists active when Rachmaninov, Siloti, Safonov, and others dominated musical life. His own teacher Goldenweiser is dry by comparison to Feinberg, who worked throughout his life as a composer. Therefore his Bach is musically probing with a tonal elegance and great diversity of touch. The Preludes and Fugues bear up to repeated listening. This is the surprise: we have here one of the finest cycles of Bach's forty-eight ever recorded, surpassing Fischer, Richter, Gould, and most others. One hopes that Russian Disc will reissue his Scriabin performances and all else as he is an artist of great importance whose playing goes beyond many other well-represented pianists. Sonically the piano's tone is fine, as the recordings were made in 1959 in Moscow. Some noise-suppression device is being used and is not really necessary, as the hiss would permit more of the overtones to resonate. An important set.

Review by Allan Evans, *Fanfare Magazine*, November/December 1994

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM
SARL Pristine Audio, 144 Rue de l'Eglise, 24610 St. Méard de Gurçon, France

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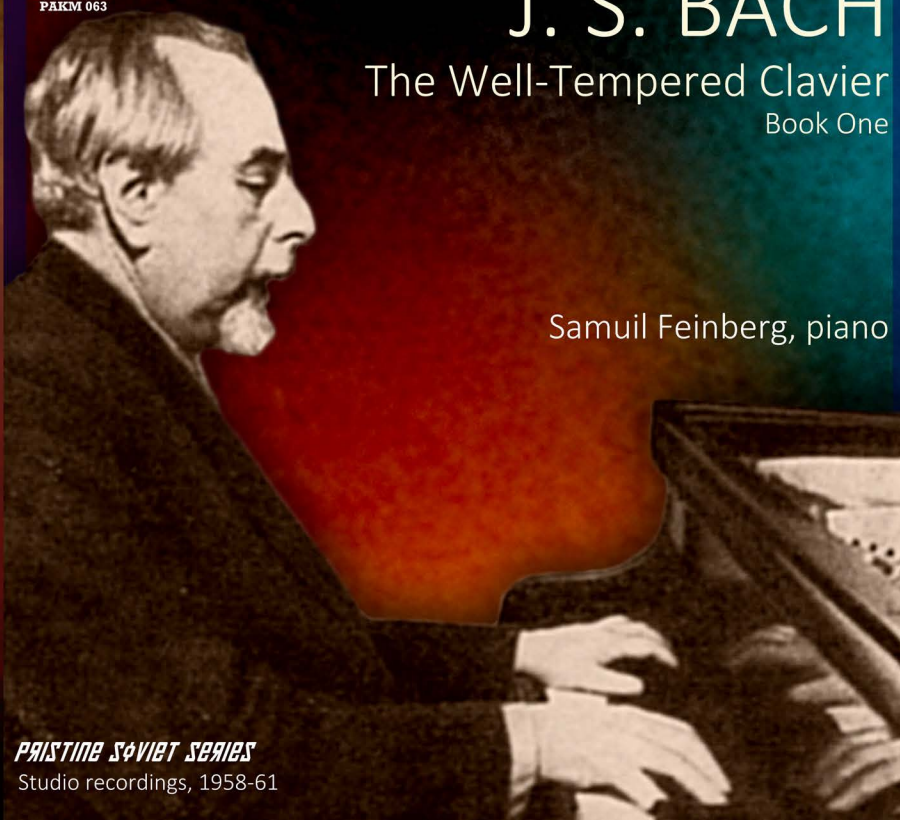
J. S. BACH

The Well-Tempered Clavier Book One

Samuil Feinberg, piano

PRISTINE SOVIET SERIES

Studio recordings, 1958-61



BACH *The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book 1*

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XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of Samuïl Feinberg

Well-Tempered Clavier Book 1
Recorded Moscow 1958-61
Issued as Melodiya D-05268-05273

Total duration: 3hr 43:05

For a full catalogue visit
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Disc One

- 1 Prelude in C major (2:31)
- 2 Fugue in C major (2:14)
- 3 Prelude in C minor (1:26)
- 4 Fugue in C minor (1:32)
- 5 Prelude in C sharp major (1:26)
- 6 Fugue in C sharp major (1:57)
- 7 Prelude in C sharp minor (2:49)
- 8 Fugue in C sharp minor (4:56)
- 9 Prelude in D major (1:10)
- 10 Fugue in D major (1:52)
- 11 Prelude in D minor (1:25)
- 12 Fugue in D minor (2:14)
- 13 Prelude in E flat major (3:05)
- 14 Fugue in E flat major (1:33)
- 15 Prelude in D sharp minor (4:17)
- 16 Fugue in D sharp minor (4:53)
- 17 Prelude in E major (1:12)
- 18 Fugue in E major (1:06)
- 19 Prelude in E minor (2:29)
- 20 Fugue in E minor (1:11)
- 21 Prelude in F major (1:01)
- 22 Fugue in F major (1:07)
- 23 Prelude in F minor (1:52)
- 24 Fugue in F minor (5:27)

Samuïl Feinberg *piano*

Disc Two

- 1 Prelude in F sharp major (1:17)
- 2 Fugue in F sharp major (1:44)
- 3 Prelude in F sharp minor (1:02)
- 4 Fugue in F sharp minor (3:51)
- 5 Prelude in G major (0:47)
- 6 Fugue in G major (2:26)
- 7 Prelude in G minor (1:52)
- 8 Fugue in G minor (2:53)
- 9 Prelude in A flat major (1:18)
- 10 Fugue in A flat major (2:42)
- 11 Prelude in G sharp minor (1:17)
- 12 Fugue in G sharp minor (2:24)
- 13 Prelude in A major (0:56)
- 14 Fugue in A major (1:55)
- 15 Prelude in A minor (1:08)
- 16 Fugue in A minor (4:16)
- 17 Prelude in B flat major (1:11)
- 18 Fugue in B flat major (1:23)
- 19 Prelude in B flat minor (2:35)
- 20 Fugue in B flat minor (3:09)
- 21 Prelude in B major (1:04)
- 22 Fugue in B major (2:11)
- 23 Prelude in B minor (4:40)
- 24 Fugue in B minor (5:33)

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SAMUIL FEINBERG

J. S. Bach: The Well-Tempered Clavier

Pristine
XR

Classic Review: MusicWeb International, 2006 (excerpt)

Salient features are the profound humanity of his approach, the warmth of his playing, the constant tempo and dynamic changes and fluctuations, pervasive rubati and rallentandi. Tempi can frequently be very fast though usually – but not invariably – melodic lines are projected with clarity. He seeks to convey meaning through phrasal plasticity, to sculpt through peaks and troughs of dynamic gradations and to explore the serious nobility of many of the Preludes through the noblest of touches. Such qualities can be heard in the Prelude of the C minor of Book I; in the Prelude of the same book's C sharp minor he is joyous, intensely alive to the swinging rhythm generated by retardation and acceleration of the rhythm. The beauty of his voicings is plainly audible in the Prelude of the C sharp minor, its density of utterance in the same key's Fugue. The occasional rushing of the D major Prelude can be contrasted with the kind of rolled chord legato of the Prelude of the E flat minor, though it's fair to say that Feinberg's ethos involves an appreciation of contrastive tempi for some of its most immediate impression.

The measured exultance of the Prelude of the A flat major is wondrous. If the momentarily confused voicings of the Fugue in B flat major disconcert one should be aware that Feinberg's vision is a personal one, embracing the florid as well as the patrician. His fluid tempi and beauty of tone enhance his playing of the Prelude in C major, which opens Book II. Playing of this level of expressivity will occasionally veer toward over-animation but the D major Fugue illustrates the components that go toward such visceral playing – alternation of tempi, richly characterised phraseology, exceptional voicings. If one listens to the Prelude of the F sharp minor one can feel that remarkable ability to increase tension through this myriad of means, to galvanise and build up blocks of dynamism and then to release and dissipate the tension. In his hands inspiration comes fully formed.

Review by Jonathan Woolf, MusicWeb International, July 2006

Producer's Note

These recordings were recorded in Moscow for mono LP release by Melodiya between 1958 and 1961. Since then their legend has only grown - by 2010 they were listed alongside versions of the Well-Tempered Clavier by Edwin Fischer (Pristine PAKM001) and Andras Schiff in Gramophone magazine's 250 greatest classical recordings, despite their intermittent and limited availability. In preparing them for this release I've endeavoured to both clarify and fill out the rather flat sound of the original through XR remastering, bringing a greater sense of clarity to the sound. The instrument itself feels more solid with the application of pitch stabilisation, which has worked both on issues of flutter and more long-term pitch instability. Ambient Stereo processing, when chosen, makes a good job of extracting the room ambience from the original recordings and giving it dimension, whilst retaining the mono image of the piano itself, and is my recommended listening format. **Andrew Rose**

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J. S. BACH

The Well-Tempered Clavier

Book Two

Samuil Feinberg, piano

PRISTINE SOVIET SERIES

Studio recordings, 1958-61

BACH *The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book 2*

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BACH THE WELL-TEMPERED CLAVIER, BOOK 2
SAMUÏL FEINBERG

PAKM 063B

PRISTINE
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Disc Three

- 1 Prelude in C major (2:40)
- 2 Fugue in C major (1:28)
- 3 Prelude in C minor (1:05)
- 4 Fugue in C minor (2:16)
- 5 Prelude in C sharp major (1:21)
- 6 Fugue in C sharp major (1:36)
- 7 Prelude in C sharp minor (5:11)
- 8 Fugue in C sharp minor (1:47)
- 9 Prelude in D major (2:26)
- 10 Fugue in D major (2:14)
- 11 Prelude in D minor (1:27)
- 12 Fugue in D minor (1:57)
- 13 Prelude in E flat major (2:14)
- 14 Fugue in E flat major (1:49)
- 15 Prelude in D sharp minor (2:02)
- 16 Fugue in D sharp minor (4:21)
- 17 Prelude in E major (2:04)
- 18 Fugue in E major (3:34)
- 19 Prelude in E minor (1:34)
- 20 Fugue in E minor (2:44)
- 21 Prelude in F major (2:27)
- 22 Fugue in F major (1:27)
- 23 Prelude in F minor (1:35)
- 24 Fugue in F minor (2:01)

Disc Four

- 1 Prelude in F sharp major (3:51)
- 2 Fugue in F sharp major (1:50)
- 3 Prelude in F sharp minor (3:03)
- 4 Fugue in F sharp minor (4:08)
- 5 Prelude in G major (1:06)
- 6 Fugue in G major (1:08)
- 7 Prelude in G minor (3:21)
- 8 Fugue in G minor (2:33)
- 9 Prelude in A flat major (4:12)
- 10 Fugue in A flat major (3:43)
- 11 Prelude in G sharp major (1:42)
- 12 Fugue in G sharp major (4:19)
- 13 Prelude in A major (1:17)
- 14 Fugue in A major (1:10)
- 15 Prelude in A minor (2:34)
- 16 Fugue in A minor (1:38)
- 17 Prelude in B flat major (2:18)
- 18 Fugue in B flat major (2:06)
- 19 Prelude in B flat minor (2:55)
- 20 Fugue in B flat minor (3:26)
- 21 Prelude in B major (1:33)
- 22 Fugue in B major (4:04)
- 23 Prelude in B minor (2:02)
- 24 Fugue in B minor (1:21)

XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of Samuïl Feinberg

Well-Tempered Clavier Book 2
Recorded Moscow 1958-61
Issued as Melodiya D-05106-05110

Total duration: 3hr 43:05

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Samuïl Feinberg *piano*