Bach Sonatas: Part I
Intimate Works for Violin and Harpsichord

Monica Huggett, *artistic director and violin*
Byron Schenkman, *harpsichord*

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Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
Sonatas for Violin and Obbligato Harpsichord

No. 5 in F Minor, BWV 1018
   I. Lamento
   II. Allegro
   III. Adagio
   IV. Vivace

No. 6 in G Major, BWV 1019
   I. Allegro
   II. Largo
   III. Allegro
   IV. Adagio
   V. Allegro
Program Notes

The six sonatas on these programs (BWV 1014-1019) were most likely written in Bach's final years in Cöthen, between 1720 and 1723, although there is some evidence that they were not completed until Bach moved to Leipzig. An early copy of the works refers to them as Sonate à Cembalo concertato è Violino Solo, col Basso per Viola da Gamba accompagnato se piace [sonatas for obbligato harpsichord and solo violin, with viola da gamba on the bass line if you like]. Several manuscripts which date from Bach's time in Leipzig show a continuous revision of the sonatas up to the end of his life. These revisions range from small changes to the notes and rhythms up to the deletion and addition of movements.

Although they are not as famous as the six solo violin sonatas and partitas (BWV 1001-1006) they, more than almost any other work, were responsible for keeping Bach's memory alive during the period between his death and the revival of his works in the mid-nineteenth century. Many copies survive in Germany, France, and England from the last half of the eighteenth century, perhaps the most important was that in the library of Baron von Swieten (1733-1803). Swieten was a diplomat, court librarian, and amateur musician who organized weekly salons dedicated to Bach's works. Those salons were attended by some of the most talented composers and performers of the day including Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven.

The sonatas were first published in 1802 by Swiss musicologist Hans Georg Nägeli. In 1841, when C. F. Peters attempted to make a complete edition of the works of Bach, he consulted with pianist Carl Czerny to correct mistakes made by Nägeli's edition. In 1864, Felix Mendelssohn and violinist Ferdinand David, who had performed the works on several occasions, worked together on the third publication by Breitkoph & Härtel.

In terms of structure, these sonatas, with the exception of No. 6, stick to the template of the traditional church sonata, with a four-movement fast-slow-fast-slow design. Only a small fraction of Bach's total output follows this model, notably the organ sonatas (BWV 525-30) and the sonatas for harpsichord and viola da gamba (BWV 1027-29). A standard trio sonata involves two melody instruments and continuo, typically keyboard, accompaniment. What is novel about these works is that Bach uses the harpsichord in two roles, that of accompanist and soloist. Generally, the left hand provides the traditional role of a continuo instrument by playing the bass line, while the right hand of the harpsichord serves as the second melodic instrument, hence the Cembalo concertato from the title. C. P. E. Bach referred to the works as "harpichord trios." While the harpsichord was a solo instrument in its own right during Bach's life, its role in chamber and ensemble music was typically regulated to a continuo instrument, responsible for the bass line and providing harmony. Bach's choice to provide a fully written out harpsichord part which serves as continuo and second melody instrument was unprecedented and served as a model for the future of the genre.

One might assume that having two, rather than three, instruments would limit a composer's possibilities for musical texture, but as you will hear today these works contain an impressive variety of compositional design. The simplest texture is that of an aria, where the violin is a soloist and the harpsichord is an accompanist. This treatment, which was common in Italian sonata composition during the eighteenth century, can be heard in the opening Adagio of Sonata No. 3 BWV 1016. The standard trio sonata texture is essentially a duet with accompaniment, wherein the violin and right hand of the keyboard are in contrapuntal dialogue. Bach occasionally writes in three intertwining contrapuntal voices, putting the left hand of the keyboard on equal footing with the right hand and violin. This texture is used in the first movement on our program, in the opening Allegro from Sonata No. 6 BWV 1019 and also in the closing presto from Sonata No. 2 BWV 1015. Occasionally Bach expands the texture to four parts, as in the exquisite largo that opens Sonata No. 5 BWV 1018, with three contrapuntal lines in the keyboard and one in the violin.

Of all the sonatas in this collection, No. 6 in G Major BWV 1019 received the most dramatic revisions. No autograph score exists for this work and each of the three sets of surviving parts and
four manuscript scores shows a different version of the work. The earliest version of the work contained six movements, but at some point Bach removed the remarkable *Cantabile, ma un poco adagio*, perhaps for its length. The final version of this sonata breaks from the standard form both in its number of movements, and by its opening *allegro*, rather than the traditional *adagio*. Two of the movements are borrowed with slight variation from the Partita for Harpsichord in E Minor BWV 830. The *largo* movement initially contained one solo voice in the violin as in the aria texture described above, but at some point Bach added a third voice in the harpsichord which transformed the work into a duet. This movement ends with a half-cadence that leads us directly to the *allegro* movement for harpsichord solo, the only one in the collection. This solo, and more broadly this collection, show Bach's tremendous skill as a harpsichordist.

**Sonata No. 5 in F Minor BWV 1018** opens with a somber *largo* which evokes the feeling of an aria from one of Bach's religious works. The violin's low and pained melody is searching for rest throughout the movement but never quite finds solace with the constantly swirling harpsichord. The other slow movement in this sonata is equally stunning for its reversal of the standard role of each instrument; the violin serves as the accompaniment in a series of repeated double stops, and the harpsichord is the sole melodic instrument. The final *vivace* contains an odd and uniquely chromatic theme.

**Sonata No. 4 in C Minor, BWV 1017** begins with a *Siciliano*, which in the minor key is typically associated with melancholy. Many scholars have noted a similarity between the violin solo in this movement and the alto aria “Erbarme dich” from the *St. Matthew Passion*. Both of the fast movements in this sonata contain fugues in three parts, with the second movement fugue being the longest by far in the collection.

The opening *adagio* of **Sonata No. 1 in B Minor BWV 1014** is meditative and serene, resembling a traditional *fantaisie*. This is followed by an *allegro* which may sound familiar to fans of the famous concerto for two violins in D Minor BWV 1043. The last two movements form a stark juxtaposition of calm and agitation.

While there are many fugues in the collection, the third movement of **Sonata No. 2 in A Major BWV 1015** is the only movement which features a canon. This canon, at the unison, between violin and the right hand of the harpsichord, is accompanied by arpeggios in the left hand. The final *allegro* of **Sonata No. 3 in E Major, BWV 1016** is one of the most joyous and energetic of the collection and provides a rousing finale to these programs.

Bach's sons, especially C. P. E. and Wilhelm Friedemann, believed these sonatas to be among their father's greatest achievements and promoted the collection throughout their lives. In Christoph Wolff's exhaustive biography of J. S. Bach, he quotes a letter by C. P. E. Bach from 1774:

> "The 6 Clavier Trios are among the best works of my dear departed father. They still sound excellent and give me much joy, although they date back more than fifty years. They contain some Adagii that could not be written in a more singable manner today."

These words are as true today as when C. P. E. first penned them. The idea that Bach's slow movements stand the test of time due to their 'sing-ability' is interesting for several reasons. They remind us that Bach's genius as a composer is not necessarily his skill as a contrapuntist, a keyboard player, or a composer of chamber music, but for the way in which he imbues his skill as a master of melody and vocalism throughout his works. Bach's combined skills as vocal and instrumental composer are key to understanding his genius and legacy.

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Monica Huggett, artistic director and violin

Violin: Domenic Fasso, Portland, Oregon, 2018
Copy of Nicolo Amati, Cremona, Italy, 1680

Monica Huggett was born in London in 1953, the fifth of seven children. She took up the violin at age six and at age sixteen entered the Royal Academy of Music as a student of Manoug Parikian.

From age seventeen, beginning as a freelance violinist in London, Monica has earned her living solely as a violinist and artistic director and, in 2008, was appointed inaugural artistic director of The Juilliard School's Historical Performance Program, where she continues as artistic advisor. Monica's expertise in the musical and social history of the Baroque era is unparalleled among performing musicians today. This huge body of knowledge and understanding, coupled with her unforced and expressive musicality, has made her an invaluable resource to students of baroque violin and period performance practice through the nineteenth century.

In the intervening five decades, Monica co-founded, with Ton Koopman, the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra; founded her own London-based ensemble, Sonnerie; worked with Christopher Hogwood at the Academy of Ancient Music and Trevor Pinnock with the English Concert; toured the United States in concert with James Galway; co-founded, in 2004, the Montana Baroque Festival; and serves as artistic director of Portland Baroque Orchestra since 1994 where she made her first appearance in 1992 playing Vivaldi's The Four Seasons. From 2006 to 2017 she was also the artistic director for Irish Baroque Orchestra, where she recorded "Flights of Fantasy," named by Alex Ross in The New Yorker as Classical Recording of the Year for 2010.

In addition to the music of the Baroque era, her interest in Classical and Romantic music performed on period instruments with historic performance practice has led her to expand the range of the repertoire she performs. She has the joy of performing some of this music with her colleagues in Portland Baroque Orchestra.

Monica is a frequent guest director and soloist around the world. Prior to lockdown she performed with Boise Baroque in Idaho. Since lockdown has begun Monica has been busy with home improvement and garden projects and realized that she's not quite as introverted as she thought!

Monica's recordings, numbering well over 100, have won numerous prizes and acclaim throughout her career. In addition to her baroque violin recordings, she recorded “Angie” with The Rolling Stones in 1972. She received the Gramophone Award for her recording of Biber's violin sonatas (2002) and her recording of J. S. Bach's "Orchestra Suites for a Young Prince" with Gonzalo X. Ruiz and Ensemble Sonnerie was nominated for a Grammy Award and won the Diapason d'or in 2009. Recordings with PBO include a 2011 recording of Bach's St. John Passion (Avie). This was followed by a 2014 release of "J. S. Bach Concertos for Oboe and Oboe d'amore" (Avie) featuring Gonzalo X. Ruiz, and a 2015 release of "J. S. Bach Concertos for One, Two and Three Violins." In 2015, Juilliard Baroque, led by Monica, released its inaugural recording, "Couperin, Les Nations: Sonades, et Suites de Simphonies en Trio."

Her gardens in Cumbria, England, and Portland, her primary residence, are a constant source of pleasure to her as is her super powerful electric bicycle.

Byron Schenkman, harpsichord

Harpsichord: Byron Will, Portland, Oregon, 1985
After J. Ruckers, Belgium, 1616

Byron Schenkman believes in the power of music to bring people together for healing and joy. By the time Byron went to their first music camp at the age of eleven, they knew that playing chamber music would be a focus of their life's work. They have since been a founding member of several ensembles, including the Seattle Baroque Orchestra which they codirected until 2013. They currently direct the chamber music series “Byron Schenkman & Friends” at Benaroya Hall in Seattle. In addition to performing live on piano, harpsichord, and fortepiano, Byron can be heard on more than forty CDs, including recordings on historical instruments from the National Music Museum, Vermillion, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. A recipient of the Erwin Bodky Award from the Cambridge Society for Early Music "for outstanding achievement in the field of early music," Byron was voted “Best Classical Instrumentalist” by the readers of Seattle Weekly, and their playing has been described in The New York Times as "sparkling," "elegant," and "insightful." Byron is a graduate of the New England Conservatory and received the Master of Music degree with honors in performance from the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music.
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