



NORTHSTAR
RECORDING
by BERT VAN DER WOUDE



JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Solo

Raaf Hekkema saxophones



SUPER AUDIO CD

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

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JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)

Sonata

Yanagisawa soprano saxophone (1992), mouthpiece Vandoren S27

- | | |
|------------------------------|------|
| [1] Adagio BWV 1001/1 | 3:27 |
| [2] Allegro BWV 1003/4 | 6:36 |
| [3] Largo BWV 1005/3 | 2:36 |
| [4] Allegro assai BWV 1005/4 | 5:03 |
| [5] Grave BWV 1003/1 | 3:40 |
| [6] Presto BWV 1001/4 | 3:50 |

[7] Chromatic Fantasia BWV 903	7:43
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Buffet-Crampon Prestige alto saxophone (1984),
vintage mouthpiece, refaced by Raaf Hekkema

[8] Fantasia BWV 922	6:06
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Yanagisawa soprano saxophone (1992), mouthpiece Vandoren S27

Prelude & Allegro BWV 998

Buescher straight alto saxophone (1927), mouthpiece by Buescher

- | | |
|--------------|------|
| [9] Prelude | 2:46 |
| [10] Allegro | 3:21 |

Partita BWV 1013

Buescher curved soprano saxophone (1924), mouthpiece by Buescher

- | | |
|---------------------------|------|
| [11] I. Allemande | 4:08 |
| [12] II. Corrente | 3:36 |
| [13] III. Sarabande | 4:15 |
| [14] IV. Bourrée anglaise | 2:44 |

Total time 60:02



Once again, this album celebrates the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, whom many consider to be the greatest composer of all time. After Bach's Partitas (*Bach Partitas for Saxophone [CC 72648]*) and his Suites (*Bach Suites for Saxophone [CC 72769]*), I am now presenting *Bach Solo*, a new solo album containing my own selection of works.

The pandemic in 2020-21 brought little to dispel the gloom among performing musicians. Concerts and tours were cancelled for an extensive period, meaning that musicians and other performing artists were confined to home with no work. Musical life was falteringly restored here and there during those years, only to have everything closed down again on virtually no notice. But these months also proved to be a time of reflection and artistic rebirth for many. A large number of children were born as a result of the pandemic, but the arts became a breeding ground for *spiritual* offspring, and so it proved for me; the genesis of the work you can hear on this album. Finally, there was plenty of time to spend many hours every day working on the project against a background of calm, which made Bach's music all the more comforting!

The prime cut with which I open this album is the *Sonata* I have compiled from Bach's three sonatas for solo violin. While working on Bach's solo violin pieces around ten years ago, I rapidly decided to confine myself to the partitas. Although these do not belong together as such but are interspersed with the three sonatas, I felt it was a sensible choice, given that they are generally of a less complex texture. The sonatas would have to wait until I felt brave enough and had gained some more experience. I felt I had finally reached that point during

one of the Covid lockdowns. I started with a couple of movements that I felt were readily presentable, avoiding the fugues, which are almost unplayable even on the violin but could only be performed on the saxophone - a single voice melodic instrument – with some trickery that I did not feel that would be appropriate to this style. After a lot of experimentation in different transpositions, it turned out to be possible to mould six of the total of twelve sonata movements into one cohesive whole, with the two central movements being in the parallel major key. Even though a sonata in six movements may go against musical tradition, I feel it is a very satisfactory outcome from a musical perspective.

Soon after this, I cast my greedy eye over the earlier keyboard works. Remarkably enough, while (or perhaps *because*) these are highly virtuosic, they are written predominantly in a single melodic line. The Chromatic Fantasia seemed relatively straightforward to recast for the saxophone, even though I had to invent some new textures that were specific to my instrument, to replace those of the original work. This iconic work symbolises early Bach for me; a composer who was heavily influenced by the fantastical style of his idol and predecessor Dieterich Buxtehude. It was to hear this old man perform that the twenty-year-old Bach made his famous pilgrimage; a journey of over 400 kilometres on foot. Buxtehude's *stylus fantasticus* can be heard in this work and the following.

I, too, made a pilgrimage to my own hero of early music, Ton Koopman. I was delighted and honoured that he was prepared to see me for a couple of hours. His enthusiasm for my arrangements grew as our meeting progressed. I am deeply grateful to him for his generous assistance. The Fantasia BWV 922 seemed to be a bigger task altogether. This work has



some minimalist sounding passages, for which I was keen to let my own creative juices flow in order to adapt the texture in such a way that I could still do the greatest justice to the music's harmonic complexity and sweeping argument. This is a work that I thoroughly enjoy performing.

I recorded the Prelude and Allegro from BWV 998 on a straight Buescher alto saxophone made in 1927. This is a special instrument that Buescher launched in an attempt to conquer the market with "something new"; it was a spectacular flop, in part due to the economic crisis that engulfed the world shortly after the instrument's introduction. There are only a few dozen examples left anywhere in the world and I am the proud owner of one of them. This work, whose middle movement (a fugue!) I have omitted, came to my attention while I was working on the suites. I discovered that Bach had also arranged the fifth suite for a type of harpsichord called a *Lautenwerk*. The comparison was enlightening. I felt it would be a fruitful exercise to search that section of the composer's output for other suitable works: my arrangement of BWV 998 is the result of this search.

My arrangement of the Partita BWV 1013 is perhaps the simplest of all my Bach transcriptions. All I had to do was transpose this into a key I considered to be better suited to my instrument. I feel that Bach's music finds its most telling resonance when it lies in a comfortable register. This is why I transposed the piece one tone down, though this becomes a major third due to the transposing nature of the soprano saxophone itself. Bach himself undertook similar transcriptions of his own music and music composed by others. On this recording, I play it on a 1924 curved Buescher soprano saxophone with a matching Buescher mouthpiece.

This is my endeavour to find a sound that is commensurate with the music, in a similar way that I approached my *Suites* album using six historical saxophones for the six suites. When this works, the sound is lighter, more transparent.

Raaf Hekkema

Translation: Bruce Gordon/ Muse Translations



Raaf Hekkema

Multiple prize-winner Raaf Hekkema has an adventurous spirit. Whether he plays Paganini's violin concerto with orchestra, explores microtones on the saxophone, unravels the inhumanly complex mathematical musical puzzles that Conlon Nancarrow wrote for the pianola – Hekkema doesn't bat an eye. Performing mainly his own arrangements, he gives approximately 100 concerts per year the world over. Hekkema has appeared as soloist with numerous orchestras and has given many international masterclasses. The solo CD 'Paganini Caprices for Saxophone' (MDG, 2006) earned him the German Echo Klassik 'Instrumentalist of the Year' title. His compositions and arrangements are published by Schott Music, CalefaxEDITION and through his website. He has released three Bach albums with Challenge Classics: Bach Partitas (2014), Bach Suites (2018) and Bach Solo (2023). To this end, he has had lessons with early music specialists such as Vera Beths, Lucy van Dael, Roel Dieltiens and Ton Koopman. For his artistic merits Hekkema was admitted to the Society of the Arts of the Royal Dutch Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2020.

Hekkema is co-founder of Calefax Reed Quintet (since 1985), for whom he has arranged and composed hundreds of works, many of which have been recorded. Calefax's repertoire spans nine centuries, Western and non-Western, from improv to contemporary classical. Additionally, the quintet has initiated projects with distinguished artists from the theatre, dance, film, animation worlds as well as those with diverse musical backgrounds. Calefax has taken lessons from, or worked with, experts in the field of early music, including Paul Van Nevel, Bartold and Sigiswald Kuijken, Jan-Willem de Vriend and Frans

Brüggen. The ensemble plays at prominent concert venues worldwide, from South America to Japan, appears regularly on international radio and television, and has issued more than 20 albums. Calefax has also been the recipient of various prizes and distinctions. Thanks to the decades-long co-operation with the members of Calefax, all of whom studied with prominent wind players from the Concertgebouw Orchestra, Hekkema's playing has taken on a musical character unlike any other saxophonist's. Raaf Hekkema teaches classical saxophone at the Royal Conservatoire The Hague.

www.raafhekkema.com | www.calefax.nl



On 'Bach Partitas for Saxophone':

'It's a daring enterprise, but Hekkema soon ends all doubts. In places the saxophone even wins over the violin. Unbelievable.' (Het Parool)

On 'Paganini Caprices for Saxophone':

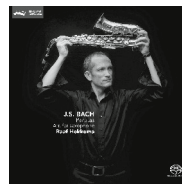
'Raaf Hekkema is insane. Thank goodness. Otherwise we would never have heard Paganini's renowned caprices on the saxophone (...) He plays the caprices in such a way that your attention never flags. Hekkema is insane, but it's brilliant insanity.' (Luister)

'Recording of the month.' (MusicWeb International)

'Highest ranking.' (Classics Today)

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CC72648

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Partitas

Arranged for saxophone

Raaf Hekkema



CC72769

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Suites BWV 1007 - 1012

Arranged for saxophone

Raaf Hekkema

This High Definition Surround Recording was Produced, Engineered and Edited by Bert van der Wolf of NorthStar Recording Services, using the 'High Quality Musical Surround Mastering' principle. The basis of this recording principle is a realistic and holographic 3 dimensional representation of the musical instruments, voices and recording venue, according to traditional concert practice. For most older music this means a frontal representation of the musical performance, but such that width and depth of the ensemble and acoustic characteristics of the hall do resemble 'real life' as much as possible. Some older compositions, and many contemporary works do specifically ask for placement of musical instruments and voices over the full 360 degrees sound scape, and in these cases the recording is as realistic as possible, within the limits of the 5.1 Surround Sound standard. This requires a very innovative use of all 6 loudspeakers and the use of completely matched, full frequency range loudspeakers for all 5 discrete channels. A complementary sub-woofer, for the ultra low frequencies under 40Hz, is highly recommended to maximally benefit from the sound quality of this recording.

This recording was produced with the use of Sonodore microphones, Avalon Acoustic & Musikelectronic Geithain monitoring, Siltech Mono-Crystal cabling and dCS - & Merging Technologies converters.



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RECORDING
by **BERT VAN DER WOLF**



www.northstarconsult.nl

**This production is also available as High Resolution digital download
at www.spiritofturtle.com**

Executive producer: Bert van der Wolf - Oude Avenhuis
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Recording: Northstar Recording Services BV
Producer, engineer, editing & mastering: Bert van der Wolf - Oude Avenhuis
A&R Challenge Classics by Marcel Landman, Valentine Laout & Mario Morese
Liner notes: Raaf Hekkema
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