



VOLUME ONE

**Goldberg Variations, BWV 988 (46:20) Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)**

1	Aria	(2:40)	17	Variation 16	(1:33)
2	Variation 1	(1:00)	18	Variation 17	(0:59)
3	Variation 2	(0:55)	19	Variation 18	(1:03)
4	Variation 3	(1:22)	20	Variation 19	(0:58)
5	Variation 4	(0:33)	21	Variation 20	(0:55)
6	Variation 5	(0:45)	22	Variation 21	(1:43)
7	Variation 6	(0:55)	23	Variation 22	(0:45)
8	Variation 7	(1:06)	24	Variation 23	(0:57)
9	Variation 8	(0:58)	25	Variation 24	(1:28)
10	Variation 9	(1:09)	26	Variation 25	(5:13)
11	Variation 10	(0:54)	27	Variation 26	(0:55)
12	Variation 11	(1:15)	28	Variation 27	(1:04)
13	Variation 12	(1:04)	29	Variation 28	(1:16)
14	Variation 13	(3:09)	30	Variation 29	(1:17)
15	Variation 14	(1:06)	31	Variation 30	(1:57)
16	Variation 15	(2:34)	32	Aria (Reprise)	(2:23)

**Suite No. 2 in F major, HWV 427 (12:42) George Frideric Handel
(1685-1759)**

33	I Adagio	(4:35)
34	II Allegro	(2:41)
35	III Adagio	(3:08)
36	IV Fuga (Allegro)	(2:18)

Garrick Ohlsson, piano

Johann Sebastian Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, BWV 988
George Frideric Handel: *Suite No. 2* in F major, HWV 427

J.S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, BWV 988, is widely regarded as the most ambitious and monumental harpsichord composition of the baroque. The result of a commission by Count Hermann Karl von Keyserlingk (the Russian envoy to Dresden), the work was published in 1741 with the following title:

Clavierübung consisting of an Aria with Diverse Variations for the Harpsichord with Two Manuals, Composed for Music Lovers, to Refresh their Spirits, by Johann Sebastian Bach: Royal Polish and Electoral Saxon Composer, Capellmeister, and Director Chori Musici in Leipzig.

Bach's first biographer, Johann Nikolaus Forkel, relates the following story about the work's provenance, a story told to the biographer by two of Bach's sons:

"For this model we are indebted to Count Keyserlingk, formerly Russian envoy to the court of the Elector of Saxony, who frequently resided in Leipzig, and brought with him Goldberg, who has been mentioned above, to have him instructed by Bach in music. The Count was often sickly, and would have sleepless nights. At these times Goldberg, who resided in the house with him, had to spend the night in adjoining room to play something for him when he could not sleep. The Count once said to Bach that he should like to have some clavier pieces for his Goldberg, which should be of such a soft and somewhat

lively character that he might be a little cheered up by them during his sleepless nights. Bach thought he could best fulfill this wish by variations, which, on account of the of the constant sameness of the basic harmony, he had hitherto considered to be an ungrateful task. But as at this time all of his works were models of art, these variations also became such under his hand. This is, indeed, the only model of the kind that he has left us. The Count thereafter called them nothing but his variations. He was never weary of hearing them, and for a long time, when sleepless nights came, he would say: 'Dear Goldberg, do play me one of my variations.'

The accuracy of this story is somewhat in question, as Bach's sons, Carl Philip Emanuel and Wilhelm Friedemann, the source of Forkel's story, were not residing in Leipzig at the time. In addition, no autograph manuscript bearing evidence of a commission is extant. However, Bach did present Count Keyserlingk a printed copy of the score during a trip he made to Dresden in November of 1741, and was the teacher of the brilliant young Johann Gottlieb Goldberg (1727-1756) beginning when the lad was but 10 years of age.

The hauntingly beautiful Aria, which serves as the theme of the variations, appeared earlier in Book II of Bach's *Clavierbüchlein for Anna Magdalena Bach* (1725). This Aria, a sarabande, consists of two 16 bar sections whose materials form the basis of the ensuing 30 variations, with the Aria repeated at the end of the work. This symmetrical design works itself out in each of the variations, with numerology playing an essential role in both the micro and macro structure of the composition. The 32 pieces which make up the complete work equal in number the measures of the Aria. Nine

of the variations are strict canons placed every three variations (Var. 3, 6, 9 etc.). The first is a canon in unison (Var. 3) with each following canon arranged to increase in intervallic distance until the final canon (Variation 27), which is at the distance of a ninth. And the variations fall into groups of three, with a freer variation following each canon, followed by a brilliant toccata-like variation. The Goldberg's second half (Variation 16) is announced by a stately French Overture, dividing the work into two 16-piece halves. As the variations progress, they do so with an ever-growing flamboyance and intensity. The culminating variation of the work is the most extended and chromatically adventurous- the stunning 25th. This remarkable statement stands as a pinnacle of inward searching, both on an emotional and compositional level. The final variation (Var. 30) is not the canon at the tenth that we are expecting, but a quodlibet- a humorous piece built upon several pre-existing tunes. Among other references are two folk tunes: "Cabbage and turnips have driven me away, Had my mother cooked meat, I'd have chosen to stay" and "I long have been away from you, Come here, come here, come here". The wit of this last variation contrasts with the return to the Aria as the piece comes full cycle and Bach, with masterful simplicity, conjures the memory of all that has passed.

In his brilliant reading, Garrick Ohlsson performs the Goldbergs without taking repeats, giving us Bach's incomparable structure with inexorable momentum, while simultaneously delighting in the repose that is its birthright.

When Handel published his eight "Great Suites" in 1720, he wrote that, "I have been obliged to publish some of the following lessons because

surreptitious and incorrect copies of them had got abroad." Indeed, Handel's fame as a virtuoso improviser on the harpsichord and his stature as a leading composer of the day had lead to the preparation of a pirate edition of the Suites that was to be published in both London and Amsterdam.

Handel's *Suites* show a broad range of influences, though it is not known precisely when he composed them. Sketches for parts of the *Suites* were made as early as 1705. Though these works are suites in name, and Handel published them with the French title *Suites de Pièces pour le Clavecin*, very few of them follow the typical design of a French suite with its traditional dance movements.

Handel's *Suite No. 2* is more reminiscent of the Italian sonata da chiesa with its sequence of slow-fast-slow-fast movements. The first movement, marked Adagio, is a delicate and highly ornamental aria while the second, marked Allegro, is a vigorous and joyful two part invention. The third movement, marked Adagio, and in the relative minor, has the intimacy of a sarabande, while the finale, Fuga (allegro), brings us back to the tonic, with an elegant three, and later, four part fugue.

Notes by L. Tipton Carruthers

Since his triumph as winner of the 1970 Chopin International Piano Competition, pianist **Garrick Ohlsson** has established himself worldwide as a musician of magisterial interpretive and technical prowess. Although he has long been regarded as one of the world's leading exponents of the music of Frédéric Chopin, Mr. Ohlsson commands an enormous repertoire, which ranges over the entire piano literature. A student of the late Claudio Arrau, Mr. Ohlsson has come to be noted for his masterly performances of the works of Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert, as well as the Romantic repertoire. His concerto repertoire alone is unusually wide and eclectic – ranging from Haydn and Mozart to works of the 21st century – and to date he has at his command some 80 concertos. A musician of commanding versatility, Mr. Ohlsson is a consummate chamber pianist who performs regularly with the world's leading chamber groups.

In 2005–06, Mr. Ohlsson will perform in North America with symphony orchestras of Cleveland, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Houston, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, Seattle, Washington, D.C., and Berkeley; and the National Arts Centre, St. Paul Chamber, and the London Philharmonic at Lincoln Center. Special projects include a tour with the Takács Quartet and appearances at the Bonn Beethovenfest. Mr. Ohlsson will appear in recital at venues including Avery Fisher Hall, Skidmore and Muhlenberg colleges, SUNY Purchase, University of California at Davis, and In Fresno, Denver, and Baton Rouge.

Highlights of Mr. Ohlsson's 2004–05 season included performances with Orpheus at Carnegie Hall and with the Emerson String Quartet at Zankel Hall and a tour with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in North America. In recent seasons Mr. Ohlsson has performed recital series devoted to the original music and transcriptions of Liszt, Rachmaninoff and Busoni; he has also

commissioned and premiered a new work for solo piano, "American Berserk," by John Adams and a piano concerto by the noted young composer Michael Hersch. In the summer of 2005, he presented the complete cycle of Beethoven piano sonatas for the first time at the Verbier Festival in Switzerland, a project that he will repeat in summer of 2006 at both Tanglewood and Ravinia.

Mr. Ohlsson is an avid chamber musician and has collaborated with the Cleveland, Emerson, Takács and Tokyo string quartets, among other ensembles. Together with violinist Jorja Fleezanis and cellist Michael Grebanier, he is a founding member of the San Francisco-based FOG Trio.

A prolific recording artist, Mr. Ohlsson can be heard on the Arabesque, RCA Victor Red Seal, Angel, Bridge, BMG, Delos, Hänssler, Nonesuch, Telarc and Virgin Classics labels. For Arabesque he has recorded the complete solo works of Chopin and four volumes of Beethoven sonatas.

A native of White Plains, N.Y., Mr. Ohlsson began his piano studies at the age of 8. He attended the Westchester Conservatory of Music and at 13 entered The Juilliard School in New York City. His musical development has been influenced in completely different ways by a succession of distinguished teachers, most notably Claudio Arrau, Olga Barabini, Tom Lishman, Sascha Gorodnitzki, Rosina Lhévinne and Irma Wolpe. Although he won First Prizes at the 1966 Busoni Competition in Italy and 1968 Montréal Piano Competition, it was his 1970 triumph at the Chopin Competition in Warsaw, where he won the Gold Medal, that brought him worldwide recognition as one of the finest pianists of his generation. Since then he has made nearly a dozen tours of Poland, where he retains immense personal popularity. Mr. Ohlsson was awarded the Avery Fisher Prize in 1994 and received the 1998 University Musical Society Distinguished Artist Award in Ann Arbor, Mich. He makes his home in San Francisco.

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