

Cecylia Arzewski

VIOLIN

SONATA NO. 1 IN G MINOR, BWV 1001 (13:40)

Adagio	(3:29)	1
Fuga (Allegro)	(5:06)	2
Siciliana	(3:06)	3
Presto	(1:59)	4

PARTITA NO. 1 IN B MINOR, BWV 1002 (22:13)

Allemanda	(5:44)	5
Double	(2:53)	6
Corrente	(2:08)	7
Double (Presto)	(1:59)	8
Sarabande	(2:51)	9
Double	(1:59)	10
Tempo di Borea	(2:18)	11
Double	(2:21)	12

SONATA NO. 2 IN A MINOR, BWV 1003 (20:09)

Grave	(3:59)	13
Fuga	(8:03)	14
Andante	(4:49)	15
Allegro	(3:18)	16

PARTITA NO. 2 IN D MINOR, BWV 1004 (27:49)

1	Allemanda	(5:09)
2	Corrente	(2:35)
3	Sarabanda	(3:35)
4	Giga	(2:11)
5	Ciaccona	(14:19)

SONATA NO. 3 IN C MAJOR, BWV 1005 (20:34)

6	Adagio	(3:57)
7	Fuga	(10:45)
8	Largo	(3:10)
9	Allegro assai	(2:42)

PARTITA NO. 3 IN E MAJOR, BWV 1006 (18:36)

10	Preludio	(3:46)
11	Loure	(3:54)
12	Gavotte en rondeau	(3:05)
13	Menuet I & II	(4:11)
14	Bourrée	(1:32)
15	Gigue	(2:08)

DISC
B
67:23

DISC
A
59:16

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685 - 1750)
SONATAS & PARTITAS
(BWV 1001-1006)

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Prod. Time: 2:03:41

NOTES BY MALCOLM MACDONALD

J. S. BACH's collection of three Sonatas and three Partitas for unaccompanied violin (in the manuscripts the six works are grouped together, each sonata followed by a partita) were composed, we presume, about the middle of the period from 1717 to 1723 that he spent as *Kapellmeister* at Cöthen. Bach's finely written manuscript, which is extant, even bears a date of 1720, but this probably refers only to the writing-out of the fair copy; the individual works may have evolved over several preceding years. Bach gives them the collective title of *Sei Solo* – *a violino senza Basso accompagnato*. One of the characteristics of his Cöthen period is an apparent desire to bring a particular instrumental genre to perfection and collect the works in that genre into a group of six – the six Cello Suites, the *Brandenburg* Concertos, the French and English Suites for keyboard, are other examples. In the case of the 'Six Solos' for violin two different genres are contrasted. The sonatas follow the pattern of the Italian *sonata da chiesa*, with four movements, none of them formally a dance, with the second movement in all three cases being a fugue; while the partitas typify the *sonata da camera* genre. As befits their title, the Partitas are essentially suites of dances, mainly in binary form, though (as in the case of No.2 in D minor) the most sublimated

and sophisticated transformations of that formal type. In point of fact Bach's manuscript refers to the *Sei Solo* as 'Book I', so it is possible that he planned a 'Book 2' bringing the total to six sonatas and six partitas. While we may regret that he did not carry out this plan, the six works of 'Book I' seem by themselves to constitute such a powerful and influential entity that they already exhaust the possibilities of 18th-century violin technique.

They were not published until 1802, in an edition by Simrock of Berlin – not apparently printed from Bach's own manuscript – which perpetuated many errors throughout the 19th century; and in 1853, shortly before his madness, Robert Schumann edited them, adding a complete piano accompaniment which later ages have found redundant. (In this he was following the example of Mendelssohn, who had added a piano part to the Chaconne of the D minor Partita.) For these works are most certainly conceived for a single instrument: the violin creates its own harmony through extensive double- and triple-stopping (easier in Bach's day than ours because of the lower, less curved bridge of the Baroque violin and the common use of the arched bow, simply detensioned by the thumb). In his manuscript Bach gives each note in a chord a separate stem, and often a separate rhythmic value, making clear that we should regard them as each belonging to a different polyphonic voice.

Altogether these works are the most eloquent possible testimony to his understanding of the capabilities and technique of the violin, and they have remained the foundation-pieces of the violin repertoire. It has been suggested that Bach had a partial model in the solo violin partitas published in 1696 by Johann Paul von Westhoff, whom he almost certainly knew during his early years at the court of Weimar. Probably Bach wrote his own 'Soli' for a particularly gifted violinist, but who this individual may have been is unknown: Joseph Speiss, leader of the Cöthen orchestra, is an obvious candidate, but the violinist-composer Johann Georg Pisendel, whom Bach had known since 1709, has also been suggested, as has Pisendel's predecessor as *Konzertmeister* in the court orchestra of Dresden, Jean-Baptiste Volumier, with whom Bach was also acquainted. It is equally possible, though, that Bach performed them himself: we have his son C.P.E. Bach's testimony that he played the violin excellently into his old age.

In the case of **Sonata No. 1 in G minor, BWV 1001**, although the key is G minor, in the manuscript Bach wrote the key signature, following Baroque convention, with a single flat (as if D minor), adding the E flat as an accidental when needed. This is technically and structurally the simplest of the six works, which is not to deny it any of its full measure of sophistication and mastery.

The opening *Adagio* of this first Sonata is a prelude fantasia. Majestic and rather elaborately ceremonial in character, it begins with a resonant four-voiced G minor chord and develops in improvisatory fashion, arriving at an easy flowing motion and a more intimate quality of expression as it proceeds, though there is a certain 'over-the-top' quality to its elaborate embellishments throughout. Albert Schweitzer guessed that the ensuing *Fuga* might have originally been conceived for organ, and in fact Bach later made an organ arrangement of it in D minor (BWV539) and for lute (BWV1000). Its mood is bright and decisive, the principal subject characterized by a head-motif of four repeated notes. Despite the subject's brevity, the fugue builds into an impressive polyphonic edifice with its continual suggestions of three- and four-part writing, attaining a culmination of impressive harmonic depth and resonance. The slow *Siciliana*, in the relative major key (B flat) is a gently lilting movement of considerable lyric pathos, a dialogue between the main theme (in the lower register) and its accompanying commentary (in the higher). Finally the design is rounded off by a determined, swift-moving *Presto*, a brilliant display of purposeful activity in a subtle Gigue rhythm, with a fine element of contrast in the suaver subsidiary theme which does not, however, interrupt the seamless onward flow of Bach's invention.

Although the term 'partita' is generally applied to a suite or sequence of dance movements, it can also refer to a set of variations. **Partita No. 1 in B minor, BWV 1002** ingeniously takes account of both meanings: each of its four movements is paired with a 'double' or variation of itself. Generally these doubles are faster, and they occasionally move into a different register or use a different harmonic colouring, although they tend to preserve the principal melodies and harmonies of the original movements. The opening *Allemanda* has an almost experimental character: its complex, irregular rhythms are quite unlike those we generally expect in an *Allemande* (and encounter, for instance, in the corresponding movement of Partita No. 2). Its 'double' is a faster, more flowing affair. The other dances are an energetic *Corrente*, with a very fast *Presto* 'double'; a sonorous and grave *Sarabande*, with a more fretful 'double'; and finally a *Tempo di borea* (in other words, a kind of Bourrée) that is both lively and syncopated, with a lavish use of double-stopping. The 'double', once again, is faster, with continuous passage-work.

Sonata No. 2 in A minor, BWV 1003, opens with another improvisatory-sounding movement, marked *Grave*. This indicates a very slow tempo, allowing the highly ornamented melody seemingly to meander rhapsodically, its various contrasting rhythms and decorative flourishes exploring the melodic potential of the minor mode. Its free, almost

intuitive form finds a perfect foil in the ensuing fugue, a movement of rough energy and formidable complexity, based on a brief subject but which allows eloquently flowing episodes between the strictly fugal passages. In a welcome contrast of relaxation, the C major *Andante* spins a long-breathed, expressive melody over a steady bass line of unbroken quavers, rather in the manner of a Vivaldi concerto. A third and a fourth voice enter from time to time to enrich the harmony. The fluid, light-hearted *Allegro* finale is a study in perpetual motion, with notable use of echo effects.

The **Partita No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1004** is the longest of all these works and also probably the best-known, in each case for the same reason – because of its final movement, a majestic *Chaconne* which in performing duration lasts as long as the other four movements combined. This movement, one of the greatest examples ever composed in the strict form of variations on a ground, is at the same time a staggering feat of writing for the solo violin, which though essentially a melody instrument must continually suggest separate polyphonic lines, and a full range of harmony. This *Chaconne* has excited the imaginations of many later composers and (starting with Mendelssohn) been arranged for many different media; the piano transcriptions by Brahms (as a study for left hand only) and Busoni (in the spirit of organ music) are both

significant additions to the piano repertoire. Bach's 64 variations are a complete compendium of 18th-century violin technique, and the eventual move from the minor to the major tonality, and the corresponding return, are moments of almost unprecedented drama in a Baroque instrumental composition. It is a stunning culmination to the whole work, and an unequalled phenomenon in violin music up to that time: in fact one of the absolutely indispensable achievements of the Western musical tradition

The melancholy and passion of the Chaconne's D minor tonality informs the entire work: the four preceding movements are all dark-hued, even when (like the Allemande) they are purposeful or (like the Gigue) they are brilliant. The Sarabande is a profoundly elegiac utterance in its own right. All the movements, in fact, have moved a considerable distance away from the dance proper, as social or entertainment music, towards a more essentialized and, indeed, spiritualized conception.

The first two movements of **Sonata No. 3 in C major, BWV 1005** form probably the most remarkable of any of the three prelude-and-fugue pairings in the sonatas; and indeed the sonata as a whole outranks the other two in sheer scale and ambitiousness, just as Partita No. 2 outranks the other two Partitas. The Sonata's introductory movement eschews the highly decorated, improvisational character of the other

preludes. It is, rather, a searching *Adagio* built on a simple underlying harmonic framework, but with a much greater amount of chromatic intensification than in the other sonatas. (Bach also produced a version of this movement for harpsichord.) Harmonically open-ended, its resolution is to be found in the huge fugue, a contrapuntal tour-de-force that is built on much more spacious lines than in the other sonatas, too. The fugue subject is for once an extended theme, which most commentators agree is derived from the chorale melody *Komm heiliger Geist, Herre Gott*, and from the mid-point of the fugue Bach several times uses it in inversion (*al riverso*). Also unusual is the fact that the first 66 bars of the fugue are recapitulated towards the end, as if completing a ternary form. The other movements are a beautifully expressive *Largo* in F major and a fleet-footed *Allegro assai*.

Partita No. 3 in E major, BWV 1006 makes a contrast to the other two by virtue of being entirely in the French rather than the Italian style. (Some authorities have argued that this shows it was intended to be played by Jean-Baptiste Volumier, who despite his name was not actually a Frenchman but a Fleming.) Bach also transcribed the work for lute.

The Partita's brilliant opening Prelude is built out of broken chords and resourceful use of bariolage technique (the rapid alternation of the same note on an open and a stopped string); it has become a favourite

with violinists, and Bach himself was evidently fond of it, for he used it again, re-arranged for organ and orchestra, in two of his church cantatas – Nos. 29 and 120a. Only the traditional concluding Gigue remains from the classic suite, the other movements being replaced by the French Loure, Gavotte en rondeau, a pair of Menuets and a Bourrée. The Loure, a dance in a slowish 6-4 time, takes its name ('slurred') from a particular kind of bagpipe most commonly found in Normandy. The Gavotte en rondeau, as its name suggests, is a gavotte but with rondo-like returns of its joyous main theme – five in all, with contrasting episodes in between. In the Menuets, the second dance is made to contrast with the first through its suggestion of a drone bass. The brief, lively Bourrée gains some of its energy from the subtle syncopations Bach introduces into the prevailing duple time. The Partita, like its fellows, ends with a Gigue, this one a vivacious affair distinguished by swift scalar runs and passage-work.

Everything I have accomplished so far has proven to me to be insufficient. The work I have done and the talent I have been told I possess are so small in comparison to Bach's genius. The performances on these discs have been the bravest of all my life's dreams. My goal in these recordings was to be as true as possible (on a modern violin and bow) to Bach's style. I knew I would never again have this great opportunity to tell my story through the master's voice. I can only hope that Bach's passion and spirituality can be heard and felt in these recordings.

My very special thanks to my teacher-mentor, the great Joseph Silverstein, for showing me the way into Bach's world; to my husband Paul Lennard for putting up with all my scales over the years, and his great support of everything I do; to Tom Mowrey, for his help in this project; to my favorite producer Steve Epstein, whose musicianship I greatly respect and admire; and to my favorite engineer Richard King, who made me sound better than I do. Special thanks to my friend of many years Connie Shuman for opening her beautiful gracious home to me always but especially during the recordings which meant the world to me, and to the Hambidge Center, for giving me the opportunity to work on my recording project in a most perfectly beautiful natural setting.

Last but not least, I thank Andrew Ryan for his great care of my beloved 1714 Petrus Guarneri of Mantua (better known as "The Beast") and Chris Reuning and Sons for helping me find the magical Persoit bow I wound up using for this recording.

A NOTE FROM
Cecylia Arzewski



Cecylia Arzewski

Born in Krakow, Poland, Ms. Arzewski began her violin studies at the age of five. After moving with her family to Israel in 1957, she studied at the Tel Aviv Conservatory with Odeon Partos. Subsequent teachers have included Ivan Galamian at Juilliard and Meadowmount, and Joseph Silverstein, at the New England Conservatory of Music. Cecylia Arzewski was also coached by Josef Gingold and Jascha Heifetz.

Concertmaster of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra from 1990-2008, Cecylia Arzewski previously was a member of the Boston Sym-

phony for 17 years. Joining the Boston Symphony in 1970, she became the youngest tenured violinist in the history of the Orchestra, and rose to the position of Assistant Concertmaster. In 1987, she joined the Cleveland Orchestra as Associate Concertmaster for three years before coming to Atlanta. Over the course of her distinguished orchestral career Ms. Arzewski performed under leading conductors including William Steinberg, Eric Leinsdorf, Eugene Ormandy, Leonard Bernstein, Kurt Masur, Bernard Haitink, Claudio Abbado, Sir Colin Davis, Sir Simon Rattle, Christoph von Dohnanyi, Yoel Levi, Lorin Maazel, and James Levine.

Ms. Arzewski was an award winner at the International Bach Competition 1978. That year she performed an unaccompa-

nied Bach solo recital at Carnegie Hall. Ms. Arzewski has also appeared as a soloist with the Cleveland Orchestra and the Boston Pops, touring Europe on two occasions playing the Mozart D major and Stravinsky Violin Concertos.

With the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Ms. Arzewski performed twenty different concertos over the course of her 18 year tenure. Her performance of the violin solos in the ASO's recording of *Scheherazade* received glowing reviews, and her recent recording of Earl Kim's Violin Concerto (Naxos) garnered critical acclaim in the USA and abroad. Ms. Arzewski was the recipient of the Hambidge Distinguished Artist Award of 2009. Ms. Arzewski currently devotes her time to teaching, recording projects and performing.

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Cover photograph of Ms. Arzewski: **Maya Press**
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Recorded March 10 & 11, May 27 & 28, 2011
at the American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York City

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