

First performance

It is not known whether these violin solos were performed during Bach's lifetime or, if they were, who the performer was. Johann Georg Pisendel and Jean-Baptiste Volumier, both talented violinists in the Dresden court, have been suggested as possible performers, as was Joseph Spiess, leader of the orchestra in Köthen. Friedrich Wilhelm Rust, who would later become part of the Bach family circle in Leipzig, also became a likely candidate. Bach himself was an able violinist from his youth, and his familiarity with the violin and its literature shows in the composition of the set and the very detailed autograph manuscript, as does incidental fingering in the text. According to his son Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, "in his youth, and until the approach of old age, he played the violin cleanly and powerfully".

Arthur Grumiaux was one of the greatest exponents ever of the Franco-Belgian school of violin playing. Born to a working-class family in Villers-Perwin, Belgium, in 1921, he was urged by his grandfather to study music and began his musical education at age four. By age eleven, he gained first prize in both violin and piano from the Charleroi Conservatory of Music and went on to study violin in Brussels with Alfred Dubois, who was a student of Eugène Ysaÿe. In 1939, he was awarded the Henri Vieuxtemps and François Prume prizes and was given, in 1940, the Prix de Virtuosité by the Belgian government. Grumiaux' studies included substantial training in counterpoint and fugue, which he pursued — along with further violin studies — with the violinist George Enesco in Paris.

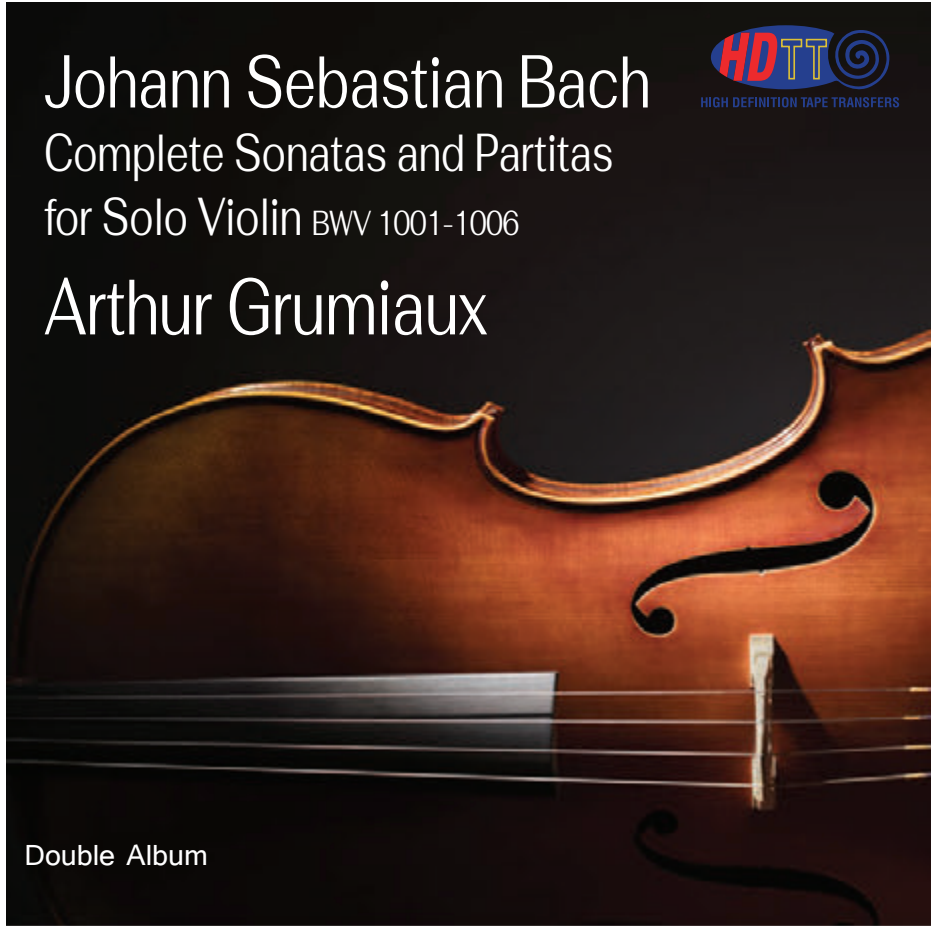
Johann Sebastian Bach

Complete Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin BWV 1001-1006

Arthur Grumiaux



Double Album



The sonatas and partitas for solo violin (BWV 1001–1006) are a set of six works composed by Johann Sebastian Bach. They are sometimes referred to in English as the sonatas and partias for solo violin in accordance with Bach's headings in the autograph manuscript: "Partia" (plural "Partien") was commonly used in German-speaking regions during Bach's time, whereas the Italian "partita" was introduced to this set in the 1879 Bach Gesellschaft edition, having become standard by that time. The set consists of three sonatas da chiesa in four movements and three partitas (or partias) in dance-form movements. The 2nd Partita is widely known for its Chaconne, considered one of the most masterly and expressive works ever written for solo violin.

The set was completed by 1720 but was not published until 1802 by Nikolaus Simrock in Bonn. Even after publication, it was largely ignored until the celebrated violinist Joseph Joachim started performing these works. Today, Bach's Sonatas and Partitas are an essential part of the violin repertoire, and they are frequently performed and recorded.

The Sei Solo a Violino senza Basso accompagnato (Six Solos for Violin Without Bass Accompaniment), as Bach titled them, firmly established the technical capability of the violin as a solo instrument. The pieces often served as archetypes for solo violin pieces by later generations of composers, including Eugène Ysaÿe and Béla Bartók.

The surviving autograph manuscript of the sonatas and partitas was made by Bach in 1720 in Köthen, where he was Kapellmeister. As Wolff (2002) comments, the paucity of sources for instrumental compositions prior to Bach's period in Leipzig makes it difficult to establish a precise chronology; nevertheless, a copy made by the Weimar organist Johann Gottfried Walther in 1714 of the Fugue in G minor for violin and continuo, BWV 1026, which has violinistic writing similar to that in BWV 1001–1006, provides support for the commonly held view that the collection could have been reworked from pieces originally composed in Weimar.

The goal of producing a polyphonic texture governed by the rules of counterpoint also indicates the influence of the first surviving works of this kind for solo violin, Johann Paul von Westhoff's partitas for solo violin composed in 1696. The virtuoso violinist Westhoff served as court musician in Dresden from 1674 to 1697 and in Weimar from 1699 until his death in 1705, so Bach would have known him for two years. The repertoire for solo violin was actively growing at the time: Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber's celebrated solo passacaglia appeared c.1676; Westhoff's collections of solo violin music were published in 1682 and 1696; Johann Joseph Vilsmayr's *Artificiosus Concentus pro Camera* in 1715, and Johann Georg Pisendel's solo violin sonata was composed around 1716; and finally, Georg Philipp Telemann published 12 Fantasias for solo violin in 1735.

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Sonata No. 1 In G Minor, BWV 1001

- 1 Adagio 3:40
- 2 Fuga (Allegro) 5:12
- 3 Siciliana 2:20
- 4 Presto 2:33

Partita No. 1 In B Minor, BWV 1002

- 5 Allemanda 4:24
- 6 Double 1:55
- 7 Corrente 2:28
- 8 Double (Presto) 2:31
- 9 Sarabande 2:01
- 10 Double 1:26
- 11 Tempo Di Borea 2:28
- 12 Double 2:24

Sonata No. 2 In A Minor, BWV 1003

- 13 3:41
- 14 Fuga 7:41
- 15 Andante 3:27
- 16 Allegro 3:55

Partita No. 2 In D Minor, BWV 1004

- 17 Allemanda 3:06
- 18 Corrente 1:58
- 19 Sarabande 3:05
- 20 Giga 3:06
- 21 Ciaccona 13:17

Sonata No. 3 In C, BWV 1005

- 22 Adagio 4:04
- 23 Fuga 10:41
- 24 Largo 2:58
- 25 Allegro Assai 2:38

Partita No. 3 In E, BWV 1006

- 26 Preludio 3:45
- 27 Loure 2:45
- 28 Gavotte En Rondeau 2:55
- 29 Menuet I-II 2:32
- 30 Bourée 1:13
- 31 Gigue 1:27

Recorded by Philips in Berlin, 11/1960 (BWV 1001, 1006); 2/1961 (BWV 1002, 1005); 3/1961 (BWV 1003, 1004)



For more info e-mail us:
admin@highdeftapetransfers.com
or visit our website:
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