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Photos of Michelle Ross by Lisa Marie Mazzucco



Michelle Ross

Discovering Bach
 COMPLETE VIOLIN SONATAS AND PARTITAS OF J.S. BACH



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*With this score Bach left us a blueprint,
as if saying, “build the cathedral.” I am grateful
for the gift of “Discovering Bach” every day,
building the cathedral anew, a life-long journey
with these works.*

Bach's manuscript reads: *Sei Solo – a Violino senza Basso accompagnato*. Six Solos for violin without Bass accompaniment. In Italian, Sei Solo also means 'you are alone.' I may fall under those who subscribe to this second meaning. Bach, being meticulous, would surely be aware of a double meaning or 'misspelling' on the front page of his manuscript. Whether or not we literally interpret Bach's six solos for violin to be dedicated to his late wife Maria Barbara, this cycle is without a doubt a solo, spiritual journey.

'Sei Solo' takes on a personal meaning for me as a violinist, wrestling with these works for one's entire life. The inner journey of being 'alone' with this music is palpable always, as though one is communing directly with Bach. It is an intensely intimate and profound dialogue, which covers the entire spectrum of the human experience. These works are mysterious in their perfection, their ability to speak to our soul with great power, and at once they are direct. It is this constant exchange between our visceral connection to these works, and the imagination's and intellect's attempt to understand and expand them, which makes the process of mastering these works and telling their story eternally stimulating.

As a performer, my moments of greatest joy occur when I play Bach. I love to bring this music into unusual settings, allowing an intersection between countless strangers and this infinite plane of beauty. I have performed Bach in concert halls around the world and everywhere in between, from fire stations, coffee shops, prisons, and ferry boats. Every moment with this music, I learn something new about myself as an artist. One must be completely honest in front of Bach, and bring courage and love to this music.



Looking at the six Sonatas and Partitas as a whole, Bach's journey takes us inward. Beginning with the G minor Adagio, he awakens the violin from its lowest note: almost as if tuning the fiddle, rising from the two open lower strings to a G minor chord, from which the rest of this score unfolds.

We travel through four minor keys in the first four works, which allows Bach set the Ciaccona in the deepest part of the cycle. The 17th of 27 movements, the Ciaccona sits at its the golden ratio, and it is here that Bach takes us to the darkest depth of the human soul. He ends the Ciaccona on two unison Ds and like a beautiful magic trick, almost erases what came before. Bach brings us back to earth with the heartbeat of the C major Adagio, gently rubbing against the one suspended D from the Ciaccona's end, pleading for it to join. Through the purity of the C major, the first major key in the cycle, we find our way outwards.

The Ciaccona and the C Major fugue, similar in monumental length, become the center of gravity of the whole work, the fulcrum of its universe. From C major, Bach ends the work in E Major, a Partita filled with ecstatic joy. The key of E major and the Partita's dances remind us of the simple ecstatic fact that we are here on Earth. Yes we have seen heartbreak, but we may still dance and smile with every fiber of ourselves. The E major Partita begins by exalting the sweet dissonance between the leading tone and the tonic – that same appoggiatura which in the A minor Fugue seemed contemplative and sombre, Bach has now transformed this dissonance into a vehicle which rejoices in the fact that we are here, we have arrived. How sweet it is that Bach gives us this E Major Partita to finish the cycle. What a beautiful and necessary way to go on with our lives.

—MICHELLE ROSS





Violinist and composer Michelle Ross is unique as both a solo artist and collaborative visionary. In 2013, she had her Carnegie Hall debut with Maestro Harry Bicket, and her European debut as both soloist and conductor, with the Orchestre de Chambre de Paris as part of Play/Direct, in Cite de La Musique. She is the recipient of the 2012 Leonore Annenberg Fellowship Fund for the Performing and Visual Arts.

A noted soloist and chamber musician, Ross is also in demand as guest concertmaster all around the world, recent highlights including appearances with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra throughout Europe, MusicAeterna and Teodor Currentzis in Russia, the Orchestre National du Capitol de Toulouse and the Orchestre d'Auvergne. Ross is the Artistic Director and Founder of Music in the Mountains, a classical chamber music festival atop Summit Powder Mountain in Eden, Utah. In 2016 Michelle also launched the inaugural season of Chamber Music at Eleventh Street Arts Gallery in New York City.

As a chamber musician, she has toured extensively with Itzhak Perlman, and also collaborates with Mitsuko Uchida and Dénes Várjon, as well as members of the Juilliard, Guarneri, and Cleveland String Quartets. Ross was an artist at the Marlboro Music Festival from 2011-2014, and has toured with Musicians from Marlboro since 2012.

As a composer and improviser, Michelle is extremely interested in creating multimedia and collaborative works, and was recently awarded a New Music USA grant for her work with RendezVous. Her work has toured with the Aspen Sante Fe Ballet for three seasons. She has also had premieres in Baryshnikov Arts Center, the Joyce Theater and in Lincoln Center's Beyond the Machine Festival.

Michelle holds a M.M. from the Juilliard School and a B.A. in English and Comparative Literature from Columbia University, where she studied in the Columbia/Juilliard joint degree program. She has studied with Dorothy DeLay, Itzhak Perlman, Catherine Cho and Ronald Copes.

Acknowledgments

It is with a full heart that I want to acknowledge and thank the Leonore Annenberg Fellowship Fund for the Performing and Visual Arts, for awarding me a Fellowship in 2012 and allowing me to record my debut CD. I would like to thank my teacher and mentor Itzhak Perlman, Toby Perlman, and the Perlman Music Program, for your support and guidance for many years. I want to thank my teacher Ronald Copes for your guidance during my recording preparation, and Christian Tetzlaff for your insight into this music. I want to thank Dr. Kendall Briggs for sharing your wisdom on Bach with me. I also want to thank Ara Guzelimian and The Juilliard School for the gracious loan of the beautiful 1692 "Avery Fisher" Antonio Stradivari violin with which I recorded this album. My journey with this violin and Bach was unforgettable. I want to thank my brilliant Producer Judith Sherman and Jeanne Velonis for a fascinating and inspiring collaboration.

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Discovering Bach

COMPLETE VIOLIN SONATAS AND PARTITAS OF J.S. BACH

Michelle Ross

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CD 1

J.S. Bach

- Sonata no. 1 in G minor, BWV 1001** [16:40]
- 1 Adagio [4:27]
 - 2 Fuga. Allegro [5:55]
 - 3 Siciliana [3:25]
 - 4 Presto [2:53]

Partita no. 1 in B minor, BWV 1002 [28:50]

- 5 Allemanda [5:12]
- 6 Double [2:23]
- 7 Corrente [3:28]
- 8 Double-Presto [3:50]
- 9 Sarabande [4:29]
- 10 Double [3:19]
- 11 Tempo di Borea [3:14]
- 12 Double [3:05]

Sonata no. 2 in A minor, BWV 1003 [22:33]

- 13 Grave [4:21]
- 14 Fuga [8:11]
- 15 Andante [5:46]
- 16 Allegro [4:15]

Total Time CD1 = 68:03

CD 2

J.S. Bach

- Partita no. 2 in D minor, BWV 1004** [32:04]
- 1 Allemanda [4:55]
 - 2 Corrente [2:40]
 - 3 Sarabanda [4:23]
 - 4 Giga [4:12]
 - 5 Ciaconna [15:53]

Sonata no. 3 in C major, BWV 1005 [23:09]

- 6 Adagio [4:25]
- 7 Fuga [10:03]
- 8 Largo [3:22]
- 9 Allegro assai [5:19]

Partita no. 3 in E major, BWV 1006 [18:39]

- 10 Preludio [3:41]
- 11 Loure [4:10]
- 12 Gavotte en Rondeaux [2:47]
- 13 Menuet I, Menuet II [4:35]
- 14 Bourée [1:35]
- 15 Gigue [1:53]

Total Time CD2 = 73:52

Michelle Ross violin

Michelle Ross violin

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