

Bach - Complete Sonatas And Partitas For Solo Violin (Grumiaux)

Written by bluesever

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Sonata No. 1 In G Minor, BWV 1001 1-01 1. *Adagio* 3:40 1-02 2. *Fuga (Allegro)* 5:12
1-03 3. *Siciliana* 2:20 1-04 4. *Presto* 2:33
Partita No. 1 In B Minor, BWV 1002
1-05 1. *Allemanda* 4:24 1-06 2. *Double* 1:55 1-07 3. *Corrente* 2:28 1-08 4. *Double*
(*Presto*) 2:31 1-09 5. *Sarabande* 2:01 1-10 6. *Double* 1:26 1-11 7. *Tempo Di Borea*
2:28 1-12 8. *Double* 2:24
Sonata No. 2 In A Minor, BWV 1003
1-13 1. *Grave* 3:41 1-14 2. *Fuga* 7:41 1-15 3. *Andante* 3:27 1-16 4. *Allegro* 3:55
Partita No. 2 In D Minor, BWV 1004
2-01 1. *Allemanda* 3:06 2-02 2. *Corrente* 1:58 2-03 3. *Sarabande* 3:05 2-04 4.
Giga 3:06 2-05 5. *Ciaccona* 13:17
Sonata No. 3 In C, BWV 1005
2-06 1. *Adagio* 4:04 2-07 2. *Fuga* 10:41 2-08 3. *Largo* 2:58 2-09 4. *Allegro Assai*
2:38
Partita No. 3 In E, BWV 1006
2-10 1. *Preludio* 3:45 2-11 2. *Loure* 2:45 2-12 3. *Gavotte En Rondeau* 2:55 2-13 4.
Menuet I-II 2:32 2-14 5. *Bourée* 1:13 2-15 6. *Gigue* 1:27
Arthur Grumiaux – violin

The name Johann Sebastian Bach conjures up a multitude of musical vistas: Cantatas and oratorios, instrumental concerti, solo keyboard works, chamber music, and, ultimately, a handful of cornerstones of Western art: The B Minor Mass, The Well-Tempered Clavier, The Art of Fugue, the Suites for Unaccompanied Cello, and these Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin. By these five works alone, Bach's place in history is assured. Not that he needs my vote, or opinion for that matter, to decide the issue.

Many words could be (and in fact have been) spilt over the issue of who are the best artists for Bach's solo instrumental works. For the keyboard works, it's often a case of "Glenn Gould vs.

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everyone else," and equally often, piano vs. harpsichord. For the cello suites, substitute Pablo Casals for Glenn Gould, and "never mind that Casals' approach wasn't `authentic'." Simply put, greatness is, well, greatness.

For these solo violin works, after having heard many great violinists - of both "authentic" and "modern" persuasion - play them, I always come back to this Arthur Grumiaux recording as being my favorite. Grumiaux was nothing if not an elegant violinist, and he had a superb Stradivarius for an instrument. But, if you are thinking that elegance is short for "sounds too smooth for me," rest assured that Grumiaux does not round off the edges of these works. This is a bravura performance of such technical virtuosity that it would be easy to believe Grumiaux to have been a Bach specialist (which he was not, having a far wider repertoire). He simply played these masterpieces in the way that he believed in them: that they do in fact represent "a cornerstone of Western art." He doesn't shortcut the crags and the tough parts; he makes apparent the implied counterpoint written in the music; his intonation and articulation are flawless. And, on top of all that, he has an instrument that simply sings.

A somewhat shorter version of all of the above: While perhaps not easy for the novice to grasp at first hearing, these works are of such sublime perfection as performed by Grumiaux that even the novice will surely be won over and revisit this performance again and again, each time bringing something new and fresh away from the performance. THIS, in a nutshell, is what this recording is all about.

In the early 60's - when this Grumiaux recording was originally produced and released on two LP's - there were very few record companies that could compete with Philips on a "quality" basis, either in sound reproduction or in lack of surface and extraneous noise. I still have those LP's, and they still sound remarkably good. The quality of those Philips master tapes clearly contributed to the excellent sound on these CD's. The two-LP release also had quite a bit extra by way of liner notes which were not included in this CD release under review. Philips has this recording included in its "Philips 50" release schedule, a clear sign that it considers Grumiaux's Bach a high point in its recording history (as do I and the other uniformly-5-star reviewers here), and a possible sign that those original liner notes will be included when the "Philips 50" remastering reaches the market. But no need to wait that long. It's the music that matters.
---Bob Zeidler

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