



(LEMS 8041)

## BACH ON CLAVICHORD, VOL. 2

### J.S. BACH: THE SEVEN TOCCATAS

#### RICHARD TROEGER, CLAVICHORD

The first recording of these works on the clavichord.

Lyrichord's series Bach On Clavichord will issue all of the major solo keyboard works of J.S. Bach in performances on the clavichord by Richard Troeger. This is the first integral recording of Bach's keyboard music ever to use the clavichord as its basis. Vol. 1 (LEMS 8038) presents the Six Partitas, in their debut recording on the clavichord. Future volumes will include the Art of Fugue, The Well-Tempered Clavier, the Inventions, Sinfonias, and Little Preludes, the French and English Suites, and other compositions. The harpsichord-specific works (Parts 2 and 4 of the Clavierubung) will be performed on the harpsichord. Instruments by Ronald Haas, after antique prototypes.

## THE TOCCATAS

The style of Bach's Toccatas for the clavier derives from the clavier and organ toccatas of Italian, Austrian, and German composers of the seventeenth century. The genre has its origins in Keyboard arrangements (intabulations) of vocal works, which would be embellished with the idioms of the keyboard. The playing style of such works, like the musical style, could be very free – a point discussed by Girolamo Frescobaldi in the preface

to his publication of Toccatas and Partitas 1615. The style, as adopted by Bach from the influences of Froberger, Bustehude, Teincken and others, includes several elements. The free style itself ("stylus phantasticus") includes broad flourishes, sections that evoke recitative, and powerful meditations. The latter sometimes move through dramatic contrasts (as in certain portions of the D Major Toccata) or take one motive through many harmonies (for instance, the section before the final fugue of the Toccata in D Minor). Fugal writing abounds, sometimes in orchestral style – the two fugues from the D Minor Toccata strongly evoke the textures of an Italian concerto grosso. All of the Toccatas conclude with a fugue, in the style of a gigue (cf. the Toccatas in D, G, and G Minor) or with other virtuosic elements – for instance, the motoric fugue (apparently borrowed by Bach from a Neapolitan source) that ends the Toccata in E Minor. A relatively new element in Bach's approach to the toccata is his use of chehestrally styled movements, not only in fugues but, for example in the hearty, almost Handeian second section of the G Minor Toccata or Adagio of the G Major Toccata.

Bach's Toccatas are early works and they sometimes receive rather dismissive treatment from modern commentators. Perhaps this is merely because they are not in the style of Bach's later works. In any case, the Toccatas are magnificent pieces that have to be listened to on their own terms. It is true that two or three of the fugues are lengthy and lack the fascinating compression of the composer's later fugal style. But they are long only because Bach delights in finding new thematic combinations and their resulting textures – to which the clavichord often responds with more variety than does the harpsichord, by the way. Bach is said to have improvised for long pwerids, putting a theme through its various paces, fugally and otherwise. Perhaps in the Fugue of the C Minor Toccata we have a record or an impression of the sort of fugal improsations he would make in his early years, exploring themes and textures more than modulation. It is conceivable that a passage like the fourth section of the F-sharp Minor Toccata sets a record for the sequential repetition – but again, note the varied textures and sonorities, and the mounting sense of urgency developing from what at first may seem to be an almost non-moving musical meditation. This is not Bach's only "obsessive" treatment of material: listen to parts of the Tocatta, to say nothing of the central areas of the early Fantasia in A Minor (BWV 922)/ In such movements, where modulation is to the fore, one is reminded of sme of the durrezze and stravaganze of early Baroque Italian composers. In both instances, one finds deliberate (and deliberately paced) tonal and harmonic exploration.

Of Course, the brilliant, extroert movements and many "improvisatory" segments (preceding the final fugue of the D Major Toccata, fro example) are immediately appealing. How dramatically Bach moves from one of these styles to another: a degree of contrast perhaps less frequent in his later keyboard works.

#### BACH'S TOCCATAS AND THE CLAVICHORD

As I remarked in the notes to Volume 1 of this series, we have little direct knowledge of the degree to which Bach utilized the clavichord, and the instrument is not specifically mentioned in the estate inventory prepared after his death. However, there are many pieces of information from the eighteenth century that link Bach with the clavichord

directly or indirectly. These include a statement by Bach's pupil Agricola that Bach often played arrangements of his own violin music on the clavichord: the interest of his pupils H.N. Gerber and J.G. Muthel in this instrument; and the decided preference shown for the clavichord by Kirnberger (one of Bach's most famous and influential pupils). Kirnberger called the clavichord "the mother of all musical instruments," a feeling akin to the interest shown by Bach's sons C.P.E. and W.F. Bach. J.S. Bach seems to have made special gifts of clavichords to his sons Carl Philipp Emanuel and Johan Christian: hardly a mark of indifference to the instrument. The range of Bach's solo keyboard music is, in the vast majority of cases, confined to four octaves (C-c''' or C-d'''), which could even suggest deliberate accommodation of the smaller types of clavichord, since many early eighteenth-century German harpsichords had a range wider than this. (The harpsichord-specific in ensemble, exceed the usual four-octave and range of so much of the solo music.) It is beyond question that the average amateur, student, or even professional in Germany at that time would usually have had a clavichord rather than a harpsichord at home. The clavichord was far less expensive than the costly and high-maintenance harpsichord, and its musical capabilities were greatly revered.

In the twentieth century the Toccatas have usually been assigned to the harpsichord. (A now lost copy made by Bach's pupil Gerber of the Toccata in G Major designated it "Concerto seu Toccata pour le Clavecin"—nominally "Concerto or Toccata for the Harpsichord," although the word "clavecin" was sometimes used generically for stringed keyboard instruments.) In Bach's obituary, written by C.P.E. Bach and J.F. Agricola, the Toccatas are designated as for the "clavier," which in 1750 would tend to mean any stringed keyboard instrument. Like most of Bach's keyboard works, they are equally at home on the harpsichord or the clavichord. The Toccatas have occasionally in the twentieth century been claimed for the organ, since they appear among organ compositions in a few (non-autograph) manuscript sources with the designation "manualiter," "for manuals only," in effect "not requiring pedal." Had these works been conceived primarily for the organ (which seems doubtful in view of a number of style elements), they would, in any case, almost certainly have been played on the clavichord, which was the preferred instrument for organists' home use. Certainly some of these works (notably the Toccata in E Minor) can be very effective on the organ. Whatever the position of other instruments in respect to the Toccatas, these works suit the sonorities of the clavichord wonderfully well. From the pleading passages to the brilliant outburst of the D Major Toccata, from the suggestions of the organ and the sometimes massive textures of the C Minor Toccata to the impassioned opening of the F-sharp Minor and the exuberance of the G Major works, I find the clavichord to be a delightful alternative to the harpsichord—which is, indeed, the stimulus for recording this series of Bach's keyboard works.

#### A NOTE ON THE INSTRUMENTS AND TEMPERAMENT

The clavichord heard throughout this recording is an unfretted instrument built in 1979 by Ronald Haas. It is modeled on originals by Johann Heinrich Silbermann, nephew and apprentice of Bach's friend Gottfried Silbermann. The design may derive from clavichords by the elder Silbermann such as were known to Bach; unfortunately, no authenticated clavichords by Gottfried Silbermann are known to be extant. Mr. Haas'

clavichord allows a fine dynamic range across the entire compass of the keyboard, and a sustaining power, sensitivity of touch, and variety of color that are responsive to both contrapuntal and homophonic textures.

For this recording, I have used the temperament attributed to Francesco Antonio Vallotti (1697-1780). This is an unequal temperament, one of many similar ways of tuning that favor the “natural” tonalities over the more remote keys. Thus, the use of different tonalities, as well as modulations from one key to another, allow different colors to emerge (a consideration important to Bach’s pupil Kirnberger, and perhaps to Bach himself). Endless speculation is possible on Bach’s ways of tempering a keyboard. Suffice it here to say that Vallotti’s temperament, which has many characteristics in common with other “well-tempered” systems, crates variety without excessive harshness in the more remote tonalities. It is well suited to the keys and modulations of the Toccatas. –Richard Troeger

#### TRACKS:

1. Toccata in G Major, BWV 916	7:47
2. Toccata in D Minor, BWV 913	12:32
3. Toccata in E Minor, BWV 914	6:54
4. Toccata in D Major, BWV 912	11:28
5. Toccata in F-Sharp Minor, BWV 910	10:48
6. Toccata in G Minor, BWV 915	8:69
7. Toccata in C Minor, BWV 911	10:26
Total Time	69:35

RICHARD TROEGER, clavichordist, harpsichordist, and fortepianist, has been heard as a recitalist, ensemble player, and lecturer throughout North America and in Europe, as well as in numerous broadcasts on CBC Radio and other stations. His performances of music from the fourteenth through the twentieth centuries have consistently received high praise for their combination of warmth, virtuosity, and scholarship. In addition to performing and teaching, Mr. Troeger is the author of many articles on early performance practice, and a contributor to the Garland Encyclopedia of Keyboard Instruments. In 2003 he published *Playing Bach on the Keyboard* (Amadeus Press), a book that puts musical and historical information into perspective for the non-specialist player; it has been named an Outstanding Academic Title by Choice (January, 2005). His earlier book, *Technique and Interpretation on the Harpsichord and Clavichord* (Indiana University

Press, 1987; expanded edition in preparation), has become a standard reference, and includes the first modern in-depth study of clavichord playing. In preparation is a book on instrumental articulation, for which he was awarded a Canada Research Fellowship. Richard Troeger has worked with early keyboard instruments and their literature since the age of twelve. His teachers have included Hugh McLean, Marie Zorn, Thomas Binkley, and Anthony Newman. He holds degrees in Performance and Musicology from Indiana University and completed his Doctorate in Early Music there. From 1986-89 he taught at The King's College, Edmonton, Alberta and from 1989-97 at the University of Alberta. He has served as President of the Boston Clavichord Society and now lives, performs, and teaches in the San Francisco Bay Area.

#### CREDITS

Tuning: Richard Troeger. (A=440. Vallotti temperament.)

Recording engineer: Garth Hobden (Arktos Recordings, Edmonton, Alberta).

Editing: Richard Troeger and Garth Hobden

Equalization and post-production: Vivian Stoll.

Design: G.S. Cram-Drach

#### A note on Recording and Playback

The clavichord is a quiet instrument but it can fill a room with extraordinary resonance. The goal of this recording is to reproduce that effect, as it would be heard by a nearby listener. For the most realistic effect, do not play these recordings at a high level. The variations in color and dynamics are the player's own and have not been artificially enhanced. ---Garth Hobden, Recording Engineer



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