



(LEMS 8076)

Seidenberg & Comparone Play Bach

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Sonata in G Major for Cello (Viola da Gamba) **and Obligato**

Harpsichord (BWV 1027)

Adagio / Allegro, ma non tanto /

Andante / Allegro moderato

From 1717 -1723, Johann Sebastian Bach served as Kapellmeister to the court of Anhalt-Cöthen where his patron Prince Leopold encouraged his creation of instrumental works rather than religious compositions. Leopold himself played violin, harpsichord and viola da gamba and “sang a good bass” (Johann Adam Hiller, 1769). Later, after Bach assumed the directorship of the Collegium Musicum at his new post in Leipzig in 1723, he prepared performance parts for the viola da gamba sonatas between 1736 and 1741. Each of the three sonatas calls for an obligato or obligatory keyboard part. The Sonata in G Major exists also as a trio sonata for two flutes and basso continuo.

Among his many accomplishments, Bach changed the role of the harpsichord in instrumental combinations from that of mere accompanying instrument to that of full partner. Before him, a harpsichord part consisted of a bass line with figures indicating the harmonies. Chamber music with a fully written out harpsichord part had been a rarity. With Bach it became the rule, as far as works for one other independent instrument and harpsichord were concerned. While in many of Bach's achievements his work represented the climactic end of long lines of development, his use of the harpsichord as a primary instrument in chamber music and in the concerto was one of the ways in which he pointed directly forward. Independently of his influence, French composers such as Mondonville, Rameau and others composed pieces with obbligato keyboard parts. Carl Philipp Emanuel acted upon the stimuli he had received from his father's work as well as from French composers. Through Carl Philipp Emanuel, and through his brother and pupil Johann Christian, the obbligato keyboard idea spread and became fashionable in the last third of the 18th century. This marked the beginning not only of the sonata for keyboard and another solo instrument but also for the keyboard trio, quartet and so on. (See liner notes to Mozart: The 1788 Trios, Lyricord Discs.)

Sonata in D Major for Cello (Viola da Gamba) and Obligato Harpsichord (BWV 1028)

Adagio / Allegro / Andante / Allegro

Of the three viola da gamba sonatas, the opening Adagio of the D major is the shortest first movement, acting as an introductory partner to the next Allegro by virtue of its brevity and its cadence on the dominant chord of A Major. Bach introduces an idea in this Adagio that he uses again in the Andante. Close to the end of the movement, the harpsichord reiterates the entire first measure of music, this time against a long held or trilled note in the cello.

Bach gives the cello and harpsichordist's right hand equal prominence as together they introduce a harmonized version of the uncomplicated, friendly tune that generates all the subsequent melodic material in the first Allegro movement. Complexities multiply in the second half of the piece where the harpsichord plays the first few notes of the tune and, joined after four measures by the cello, goes on to weave an elaborate extension.

The Andante, a long and exquisitely beautiful movement, melds a flowing 12/8 pattern in the bass with the poignancy of B minor as Bach tells a story we want to hear to its end, and again and again.

An Allegro in 6/8 offers opportunities to use the hemiola, a metric device in 6/8 time. Instead of two strong beats in the measure (on the first and fourth eighth-notes) the harmonic rhythm dictates three strong beats on the first, third and fifth eighth-notes. Here Bach also enriches his gift with the possibilities of a polyrhythmic approach. Not only can the instrumentalists change metric accents together at the same time, but they can each play in a different meter at the same time. Despite the existence of these possibilities, we have noticed that other practitioners of this music do not recognize these possibilities or do not play them so that these differences are audible to others. We welcome

you to share our perceptions!

Sonata in G minor for Cello
(Viola da Gamba) & **Obbligato**
Harpsichord (BWV 1029)

Vivace / Adagio / Allegro

Among the three sonatas for viola da gamba, the D Major and G Major hearken back to a four-movement form known as sonata da chiesa emanating from Italy in the late 17th century. Giuseppe Torelli (1650-1702) introduced it in his *Sinfonie a 2,3,4 istromenti* (1687) and later composers adopted it, notably Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713) in his *24 Sonate da chiesa a tre* (1683 and 1689). The G minor, however, looks forward both in its unique (among the three sonatas) three-movement form and the style of its opening movement. The quick movements in the Sonata in G Major conform closely to the sonata da chiesa ideal of fugally conceived Allegros with three independent lines spinning out the structure. In both of these Allegros, the two voices in the harpsichord introduce the contrapuntal material while the cello enters after a short interval.

In the G minor Vivace, the cello leads the way with an assertive rhythmic motive that retains the same harmony for a measure and a half, paradoxically producing tremendous tension with that stasis. The harpsichord accompanies in full-bodied chords that impart an orchestral richness to the texture. Throughout the movement, Bach seems more interested in driving the piece forward with harmony than with interweaving melodic lines. This is not to say that he eschews counterpoint. Far from it! But in this piece he prefers, for the most part, broken chord figures (arising from a clearly pre-conceived harmonic plan) that themselves give the impression of creating the harmony as they advance in time. It brings to mind his Sixth Brandenburg Concerto, composed for six low-register string instruments (including two violas da gamba) in the similarity of opening motives and static harmonies kept buoyant by broken chord figurations. The Adagio movements of the Sixth Brandenburg and this G minor sonata also reflect one another in the initial terseness of their melodies and in the quiet, quarter-note movements of their bass lines.

Insistent repeated notes, a descending bass line and a time signature in 6/8 all contribute to the excitement of the final Allegro. Here we have another example of the Italian fugal ideal as the harpsichord's treble entrance invites the cello to join in precise imitation. Throughout the movement the two instruments trade motives, broken chord riffs and melodies, with the repeated note figure occurring in another guise: as an accompaniment in the harpsichord's bass line. The 6/8 time signature gives many opportunities for the players to manipulate the metrical accents, using the hemiola. The possibilities are as follows:

1. Two stresses per bar on eighth-note beats 1 and 4.
2. Three stresses per bar on beats 1, 3 and 5. For musicians who can feel the shift in stress (and not all can or do!), playing with the possibilities of hemiola makes 6/8 the most inviting time signature of all. (In the Andante of his Concerto in the Italian Style for solo harpsichord, Bach combined 6/8 time feeling in the left hand with 3/4 in the right, a genuine tour de force.)

Notes compiled by Elaine Comparone
Harpichord by Frank Hubbard, Boston, 1972.
John Ostendorf, producer
David Barnes, recording engineer
Robert Blake, Cover photo treatment

Tracks and Timings

Sonata No. 1

G Major, BWV 1027

1 Adagio (3:47)

2 Allegro, ma non tanto (3:22)

3 Andante (2:39)

4 Allegro moderato (2:55)

Sonata No. 2

D Major, BWV 1028

5 Adagio (2:05)

6 Allegro (4:03)

7 Andante (5:01)

8 Allegro (4:12)

Sonata No. 3

G minor, BWV 1029

9 Vivace (5:32)

10 Adagio (6:32)

11 Allegro (3:43)

The Artists

PETER SEIDENBERG, cellist with The Queen's Chamber Band, has played throughout the US, Europe, and Asia as soloist and chamber musician. He made his solo debut with the Chicago Symphony, and has appeared as soloist with many orchestras including Century Orchestra of Osaka, New American Chamber Orchestra, De Paul Chamber Orchestra and the Eastman-Rochester Philharmonic. For four years he served as principal cellist with Century Orchestra of Osaka. He has played with members of the Cleveland, Tokyo, Juilliard and Emerson Quartets and has participated in the Marlboro, Aspen, Casals and Norfolk festivals. He was a founding member of the Elements String Quartet and currently performs with the Oracle Trio. His numerous recordings can be found on the Pantheon, RCA, EMF, CRI labels and with The Queen's Chamber Band for Lyrichord and Albany. He lives in Hastings-on-Hudson, NY with his wife, violinist April Johnson, and two daughters, Beatrice and Olivia.

Since her acclaimed New York recital debut as a Concert Artist Guild award winner, harpsichordist **ELAINE COMPARONE** has maintained a varied career as recitalist, soloist with orchestra, chamber musician, organist and choir director, recording

artist, impresaria, teacher and collaborator with composers, choreographers and video artists. A former Fulbright Fellow and Affiliate Artist, she took her harpsichords to performances in each of the continental United States. In France, Italy and England she performed her unique interpretations of Scarlatti. In 1978 she founded Harpsichord Unlimited, a non-profit organization dedicated to stimulating interest in the harpsichord as a living, contemporary instrument. In 1992 she formed The Queen's Chamber Band, modeled after the ensemble created by the "London Bach" for Queen Charlotte Sophia, wife of "Mad" King George III. Adelphi University recently appointed her Professor of Harpsichord. A Massachusetts native, she makes her home on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

Peter Seidenberg and Elaine Comparone can be seen and heard in videos of live performances on Youtube. Enter "ecomparone" in the search engine. This recording was made possible by the following generous sponsors: Caryl and Henry Seidenberg; Jean Johnson; Lawrence Zingesser, MD; Evan Mirapaul; Susan Boccardi and the Susswein family; Simon Ticho; Milton & Barbara Meshirer ; Dajoang Guo & Jing Lu; Robert & Sarah M. Underhill; Carolyn & David Bloom; Laurence Neuman & Qing Hou



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