A UNIVERSE OF

THE SOLO SONATAS & PARTITAS FOR VIOLIN SENZA BASSO OF BACH

PROGRAM

CONCERT 1: Thursday 15th June, 7pm Paddington Uniting Church, Paddington

CONCERT 2: Friday 16th June, 7pm Paddington Uniting Church, Paddington

CONCERT 3: Saturday 17th June, 7pm Paddington Uniting Church, Paddington

CONCERT 4: Sunday 18th June, 2:30pm Our Lady of Dolours, Chatswood





BACH AKADEMIE AUSTRALIA LTD A not-for-profit company registered in NSW ABN 64 617 435 588

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GRAPHIC DESIGN: Justin Archer | JellyTreeStudio.com

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

W hat does it feel like to prepare the complete sonatas and partitas of Bach in one program?

Madness? Insanity? Well both really, in spades.

Why am I doing it? Simply because I had to. I feel as if I have been working towards this point my entire life, and if I am to take myself seriously as a specialist practitioner of Bach's music, this is something I simply must do. This music is incredibly important to me, it has been with me my whole life, stayed with me, been a constant source of comfort, inspiration and wonder, and as much as it is a huge undertaking, stressful, tiring, frustrating, etc, it is also one of the utmost satisfaction and wonder.



For myself, it just serves to highlight more than ever the uniqueness of J.S. Bach, and further sets him apart from all his contemporaries, and all other composers who came before and after.

Preparing these 6 works has forced me to delve right into my own playing, to rethink many things, my set up, position, approach to the string, how the violin fundamentally works as a resonant instrument, all of which has benefitted me enormously and is a real gift.

Then of course, there's the music itself. Take for example the 3 groundbreaking fugues contained within the Sonatas. What's astonishing is that he doesn't compromise one bit on the beauty or integrity of the fugue subject or its various cells which weave in and around each other, despite the fact that the violin has traditionally been a monophonic instrument.

What is also extraordinary is that it's quite obvious that this is keyboard writing, but on a violin.

How does Bach do this, given the limitations of the instrument? If polyphonic music was not meant to be played on the violin, Johann Sebastian Bach didn't get the memo.

Each one of these sonatas and partitas is and has a different personality, and each one tells a story, which is perhaps why the celebrated Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe was inspired to dedicate his 6 solo sonatas for violin (inspired by Bach's) to a different friend and violinist, each who had their own distinct personalities, quirks and foibles.

So I welcome you to join me on this journey through these 6 wondrous works where you will experience the entirety of the human condition through the medium of one violin. Let me tell you their stories...

Madeleine Easton

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR BACH AKADEMIE AUSTRALIA

PROGRAMS

ARTISTS

Madeleine Easton – Solo violin John Ma – Violin Mikaela Oberg – Flute Anthea Cottee – Cello Nathan Cox – Harpsichord

CONCERT 1: June 15 2023

J.S. Bach Sonata No.1 in G minor BWV 1001

- 1. Adagio
- 2. Fuga (allegro)
- 3. Siciliana
- 4. Presto

Alessandro Scarlatti Concerto in C for recorder, two violins, cello, and continuo

- 1. Adagio
- 2. Fuga
- 3. Largo
- 4. Allegro

J.S. Bach Partita No.1 in B minor BWV 1002

- 1. Allemanda Double
- 2. Corrente Double (Presto)
- 3. Sarabanda Double
- 4. Tempo di Borea Double

CONCERT 2: June 16 2023

- J.S. Bach Sonata No.2 in A minor BWV 1003
- 1. Grave
- 2. Fuga
- 3. Andante
- 4. Allegro

G.F. Händel Sonata in F major, Op.2 No.4 HWV 389

- 1. Larghetto
- 2. Allegro
- 3. Adagio
- 4. Allegro
- 5. Allegro

J.S. Bach Partita No.2 in D minor BWV 1004

- 1. Allemanda
- 2. Corrente
- 3. Sarabanda
- 4. Giga
- 5. Ciaconna

CONCERT 3: June 17 2023

J.S. Bach Sonata No.3 in C major BWV 1005

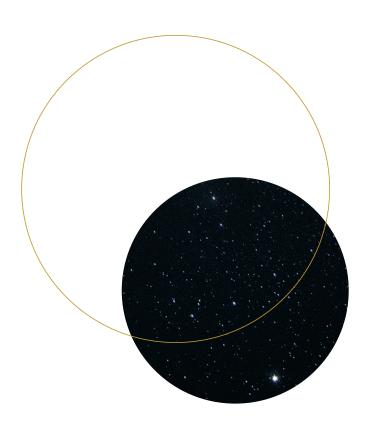
- 1. Adagio
- 2. Fuga
- 3. Largo
- 4. Allegro Assai

Jean-Marie Leclair Trio sonata Op.4 No.3 in D minor

- 1. Adagio
- 2. Allegro
- 3. Aria, Allegro ma poco
- 4. Sarabanda. Largo
- 5. Allegro

J.S. Bach Partita No.3 in E major BWV 1006

- 1. Preludio
- 2. Loure
- 3. Gavotte en rondeau
- 4. Menuet 1
- 5. Menuet 2
- 6. Bourrée
- 7. Gigue



CONCERT 4: June 18 2023

J.S. Bach Sonata No.1 in G minor BWV 1001

- 1. Adagio
- 2. Fuga (allegro)
- 3. Siciliana
- 4. Presto

Alessandro Scarlatti Concerto in C for recorder, 2 violins, cello and continuo

- 1. Adagio
- 2. Fuga
- 3. Largo
- 4. Allegro

J.S. Bach Partita No.2 in D minor BWV 1004

- 1. Allemanda
- 2. Corrente
- 3. Sarabanda
- 4. Giga
- 5. Ciaconna
- —— interval ——

J.S. Bach Sonata No.2 in A minor BWV 1003

- 1. Grave
- 2. Fuga
- 3. Andante
- 4. Allegro

F. Couperin Les Barricades Mystérieuses from the *Ordre 6ème de clavecin* in the second book Pièces de Clavecin

J.S. Bach Partita No.3 in E major BWV 1006

- 1. Preludio
- 2. Loure
- 3. Gavotte en rondeau
- 4. Menuet 1
- 5. Menuet 2
- 6. Bourrée
- 7. Gigue

Partia 3 to a Violine Polo sente Dalso. Martin Brind Brind Brind Brind Brind

PROGRAM NOTES

t is virtually impossible to sum up the historical and musical importance of these 6 works adequately, certainly in just a few pages. What is universally agreed is that they are considered to be among the greatest works of musical art ever created, and should be included in the company of the very greatest works of art produced by the human race.

Bach's works for solo violin are the Shakespearean monologues of the string world: The indefinable balance of technical mastery and interpretive insight they require is the touchstone of a great artist. - Thomas May

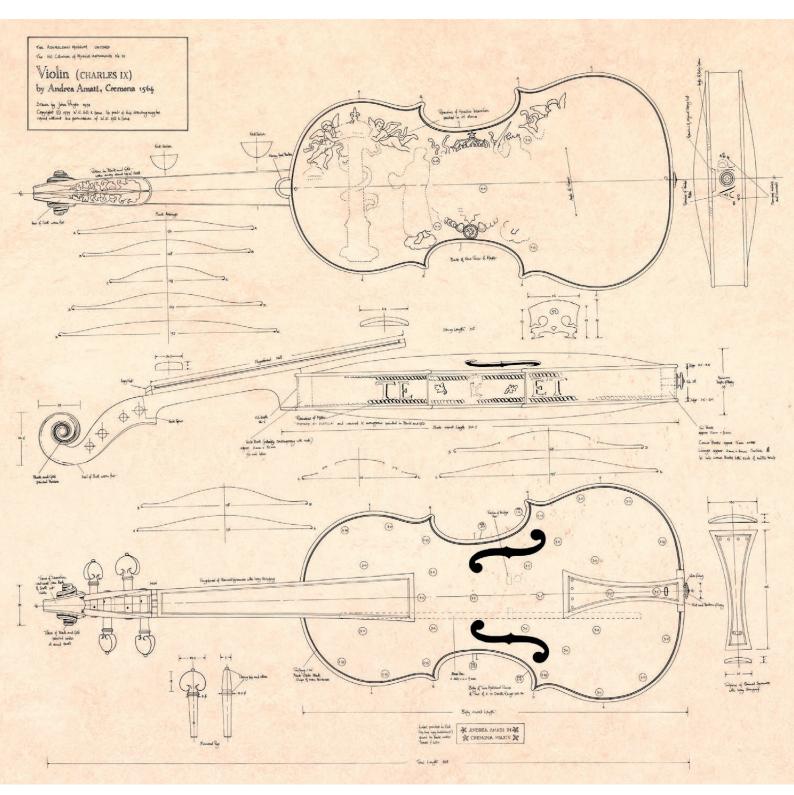
Before delving into these works, I feel it necessary to explore a little of the background to how they came into being. It is possible that some of these works were conceived as early as 1703 in Bach's first Weimar years due to the discovery of a copy of the Fugue in G minor for violin and continuo, BWV 1026, made by the Weimar organist Johann Gottfried Walther in 1714. No one is sure why Bach embarked upon such task for the solo violin, but it was during his time in Cöthen he was able to devote himself to instrumental writing, more than any other time in his life and so in this context, it makes sense. The set of 6 works we now have were begun in earnest from 1717 when he arrived in Cöthen and finally completed in 1720, although not published until 1802. It is difficult to comprehend the strikingly low level of recognition and appreciation of Bach's work during his life and the time immediately following it, thus sadly, these works were largely ignored until the famous violinist Joseph Joachim began including them in his concert programs. It would be truly wonderful to know exactly when in the year 1720 Bach completed the set, as it would help us better understand how he came to infuse them with such deeply profound emotion. It is impossible to ignore the catastrophic event that befell Bach in that year, the tragic and untimely death of his beloved first wife Maria Barbara Bach. Of the seven children that Bach had with Maria Barbara, only 4 survived to adulthood. The hardship and trauma of losing so many children as well as his wife goes a long way in explaining

the deep and profound emotional impact of these works.

So where did J.S. Bach arrive upon the idea of writing for a solo violin? Was he the first? History tells us he was not. Music written for solo violin was developing rapidly 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 Georg Pisendel's solo violin sonata was composed around 1716; and finally, Georg Philipp Telemann published 12 Fantasias for solo violin in 1735. That said, it is all but impossible to name a composer whose influence equals that of Johann Sebastian Bach, especially in relation to the genre of solo instrumental music. The solo violin sonatas and partitas have served as a foundation for all other composers who have written for the violin, and serve as the ultimate benchmark of any violinist both technically and musically.

Bach, a born fighter who exulted in overcoming apparently unsurmountable difficulties, succeeded in doing the nearly impossible: to write four-part and polyphonic variations for an instrument whose very nature seems to exclude such devices. – Karl Geiringer

So let us begin our journey through these 6 prodigious works. Bach arranged his set as 3 "church" sonatas with four movements (grand slow movement, animated Fugue, lyrical slow movement and brilliant fast movement) alternating with 3 Partitas that each have a unique architecture in their movement structure. This makes three pairs: Sonata, Partita; Sonata, Partita; Sonata, Partita. The key relationships in themselves are fascinating, which should come as no surprise for those who know their Bach. He uses the keys of the open strings of the violin, G-D-A-E and includes two other keys, C major and B minor (a rather unusual key for the violin). Looking at the interval relationships between these keys is the key to decoding Bach's invisible structure: if one counts the number of semitones from G to B = up 4 semitones; B to A = down



Violin Charles IX by Andrea Amati, Cremona 1564. Drawn by John Pringle, 1979 Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

2 semitones; A to D = up 5 semitones; D to C = down 2 semitones; C to E = up 4 semitones, we find this: 4 - 2 - 5 - 2 - 4, a palindrome of interval distances. Here we find an upward spiral, beautifully symmetrical around the large leap in the centre. A spiral to God, no doubt.

J.S. Bach Sonata No.1 in G minor BWV 1001 Bach begins his set with one of the most beautiful Adagios in classical music. It has a wistful, improvisatory character, with the melody being woven in and out of the 4 polyphonic voices which are present right from the start. Bach takes you on a harmonic journey through harmonic tension and release, punctuated by cadence points, finally climaxing in a searing G minor chord. He then begins his first fugue. It is the shortest of the 3, at a mere 3 pages long. The voices are introduced one by one, the scope is then enlarged by two large fugal sections which culminate in a miraculous display of arpeggiation, extremely reminiscent of bariolage harpsichord writing. The fugue progresses through episodes (sections devoid of the fugue subject), major tonal centres, finally arriving at a pedal point, signalling the landing sequence has begun. The final gesture is a written out improvisation, extending the tension and creating a remarkable sense of conclusion. Bach chooses a lilting Siciliana for his 2nd slow movement in the relative major. creating a sense of calm and comfort with cradle-like rhythms. Bach shows us glimpses of the tragic reality of life in moments of sorrow but doesn't dwell there, bringing us back to the calm waters of B flat major. The influence of Vivaldi is firmly evident in the final presto with its rhythmic vitality and harmonic sequences. It is a spectacularly energetic and vivacious movement.

J.S. Bach Partita No.1 in B minor BWV 1002 Our first Partita in B minor is unusual for two reasons. It feels distinctly French, despite its Italian dances and unusually, every movement is accompanied by a 'double' serving as a variation on the preceding dance, allowing Bach a wonderful opportunity to exercise his inexhaustible talent for improvisation. The opening Allemanda employs strong, regal dotted figures, synonymous with the French overture style, its accompanying double providing a perfect foil with gentle, paired bowing figures. The Corrente feels not just like a running dance, but also a jumping one, the accompanying 'double' truly giving the impression of running by a stream of constant semiquavers. An elegant Sarabanda follows, its double displaying a beautiful elegance of touch with its flowing triplets. In the final Tempo di Borea, Bach injects energy into his tricky but satisfying Borea, increasing the tension until the very last note of the final double. It is a huge work, consisting of 8 separate movements, taking us on a true journey across its vast arch.

J.S. Bach Sonata No.2 in A minor BWV 1003 The 2nd sonata in A minor almost forms a pair with its earlier counterpart, being strikingly similar in form. The opening Adagio begins with a beautiful yet mournful melody that is passed from voice to voice, accompanied by polyphony throughout. Winding the melody down, he ends on a solitary octave in the dominant key, perfectly setting the scene for our next great fugal journey. The A minor fugue is significantly larger in scope than the G minor, coming in at 5 pages long. It contains an even greater scope of emotional highs and lows due to Bach's use of constant descending chromatic bass lines throughout. It is a deeply emotional work, and my personal favourite of the 3 fugues. The Andante is unique in these works as it is the only movement where Bach writes a constant and defined bass line, allowing the violin to accompany itself in the relative major key of C in guiet contemplation. Again the final Allegro owes much to Vivaldi, being a marvellous exercise in violin virtuosity and use of harmonic sequences.

J.S. Bach Partita No.2 in D minor BWV 1004 We now arrive at the D minor Partita, arguably the best known of the set of 6. It is a work of imposing gravity, astonishing as much for the inventiveness of its small-scale figuration as for the brilliance of its architectural construction. Each movement feels as if it is tilting towards the final conclusion, the majestic Ciaconna that exceeds in length all four of them together. The first 4 movements do not contain the technical challenges of the previous partita, and are thus traditionally the very first moments one learns from the entire book. The opening Allemanda, Corrente and Giga each have their own distinct characters and follow a similar harmonic trajectory. They modulate to the same keys, in the same order, giving the impression that they are melodic variations on the same harmonic pattern - perhaps a premonition of the Ciaconna, but which achieve a wonderful harmonic cohesiveness. When the Chaconne does arrive, it comes in the form of a sarabande variée consisting of 64 variations on a four-bar harmonic pattern presented at the outset. There are 33 minor variations, 19 in the major, the arrival of which marks a breath-taking change in mood, and then finally 12 more in the minor, giving the work a tri-part feel. The seemingly inexhaustible variety of textures and emotions that Bach manages to create out of this simple 4-bar pattern is the reason this work is considered the undisputed pinnacle of solo violin writing.

On one stave, for a small instrument, the man writes a whole world of the deepest thoughts and most powerful feelings...

– Johannes Brahms in a letter to Clara Schumann, as he contemplated the majesty of the work.

David Ledbetter, in his excellent study of Bach's unaccompanied violin works, sums up the commentator's dilemma when facing an artistic creation of this magnitude: "There is no point in trying to match it in words," he says. Sage advice, indeed.

J.S. Bach Sonata No.3 in C major BWV 1005 And now we arrive at the 3rd sonata in C major. In terms of scale, this is the largest of the 3 sonatas and is in a class unto itself. The Adagio opening of the C major Sonata is striking for its sparseness and harmonic inventiveness. It unfolds with serene, unified dotted rhythms in impossibly slow harmonic motion, stacking suspensions after suspension. The following fugue is on a scale that dwarfs the previous 2, coming in at 7 pages long and 354 bars, Bach's longest for any instrument other than the keyboard. Sustaining interest over such a large structure with limited melodic materials is a challenge Bach rose to, showing that he was more than up to the task. It is the only fugue in the book based on a religious theme: the Pentecost chant "Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herre Gott" (Come, Holy Ghost, Lord God). The choice of a religious theme for his most significant fugue is no accident; he looked to

God throughout his entire life for inspiration and clearly does so here. The work travels through fugal sections, long extended episodes of staggering brilliance, then Bach turns both subject and countersubject upside down to embark on an passage (marked al reverso) of aggressive, fearless polyphony, with harmonic rhythm twice as fast as the rest of the fugue. Passing through further episodes, he concludes with a form of recapitulation, thus creating a huge arch. It is the most magnificent 4 part stretto fugue: and the fact that it ends on a perfect 5th of C and G is enormously significant. The number of elements Bach balances is absolutely staggering, firmly cementing his status as a true genius. The Largo that follows provides a welcome repose and feels almost like a song without words. It is followed by another brilliant Allegro, the second half of which is much more extensive, using extended motives from the first before emerging into the high range of the violin with a triumphant burst on the way to the conclusion of the Sonata.

J.S. Bach Partita No.3 in E major BWV 1006

Our final work in the set of 6 is the brilliant Partita No.3 in E major. The key itself, with its 4 sharps immediately conjures brightness and energy. Rita Steblin describes E major's characteristics as 'Noisy shouts of joy, laughing pleasure and not yet complete, full delight lies in E Major". The Partita's dance movements are all French, giving the entire work a beautiful, elegant, joyful feel.

The opening Preludio is a masterclass in keyboard harmonic writing for the violin. Bach makes full use of the violin's range, and shows his vast knowledge of the possibilities of the instrument. It consists of almost entirely semiquavers, and was incidentally used by Bach in two of his later cantatas. Following the Preludio is the moderately slow Loure, a lilting 6/4 feel dance, leading into the Gavotte en Rondeau. With its two light upbeats and strong downbeat, this movement feels entirely fun, mitigated by the episodes which increase in seriousness as the movement progresses. This movement was chosen to be included on the Voyager spacecraft's Golden Record which was launched into space in 1977 to portray the diversity of life and culture on earth. Bach follows with two minuets, leading into an energetic

Boureé, similar in feel to the corresponding Borea in his B minor Partita, and concludes with a Gigue that swings lightheartedly to and fro, providing a sunny and carefree ending to his Partita.

Mention must also be made of the four interspersed chamber works throughout the program. The presence of pieces by Scarlatti, Händel, Leclair and Couperin acknowledge the Italian, German and French influences Bach absorbed throughout his life.

And so to conclude. After digesting the huge technical and artistic challenges that these works present, and trying to master them, the only thing left to do is interpret. Throughout my life thus far, I have listened to, assimilated and experimented with them all, and ultimately feel that there is no 'right way' to perform them. In truth, it seems to this performer that it is most important to honestly place this music in the context of a player's life, and so I humbly present to you my interpretation. I hope to play these works in a way that strikes a chord with the listener, thus uniting us. Every performance of these works will always be different. This is living music, and walks in step with us as we walk through life.

Madeleine Easton



SEPTEMBER CONCERT

BACH A CHILD OF THE STARS

We present this program of music inspired by the heavenly body that both J.S. Bach and the First Nations peoples of Australia have seen every day for millennia – the Morning Star. We are an ensemble dedicated to the works of J.S. Bach, however we are Bach Akademie Australia, therefore seek to unite the incredibly important musical cultures of Europe with the country we stand on by presenting a program of music by Bach and other important composers inspired by the heavens, alongside a newly commissioned work by Australian Indigenous composer Troy Russell, inspired by the Morning Star, just as J.S. Bach was centuries ago.

DATES

Friday 22nd September, 7:30pm Great Hall, The University of Sydney

Saturday 23rd September, 7:30pm St Finbar's Catholic Church, Glenbrook

Sunday 24th September, 2:30pm Our Lady of Dolours, Chatswood



[&]quot;Venus" by Kevin Merritt PHOTO: KEVIN MERRIT/SHARED SKY

PROGRAM

J.S. Bach Cantata 'Himmelskönig, sei willkommen' BWV 182 – Sinfonia

Tomás Luis de Victoria O Magnum Mysterium

Presentation by Professor Jonathan Bland-Hawthorn 'Galileo, Bach and the western view of the heavens'

Vincenzo Galilei Excerpts from the Well Tempered Lute Simon Martyn-Ellis – Lute

Troy Russell Clans

J.S. Bach Cantata 'Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern' BWV 1

BOOKINGS

www.bachakademieaustralia.com.au 1300 785 377



B ach Akademie Australia is dedicated to performing the works of J.S. Bach. It was established in late 2016 by Australian violinist Madeleine Easton who has recently returned after 19 years of living and working in Europe. Its aim is to enrich and enhance the musical life of Australia. The ensemble's focus on mastery of performance, authenticity and originality of interpretation brings the music of J.S. Bach to life. Bach Akademie Australia is also focused on forging close links with academic institutions around the country in order to establish educational and learning opportunities for young musicians.

Having been inspired by the world's leading Bach exponents, Bach Akademie Australia aims to give audiences the very best experience of J.S. Bach's music. Bach Akademie Australia gave its first public performance in April 2017, which sold out in Sydney, and later that year at the Canberra International Music Festival. These concerts were met with glowing reviews in Limelight Magazine and Canberra City News. The orchestra also made its debut recording for ABC Classic FM of Bach's Cantata BWV 4 'Christ lag in Todesbanden' and Brandenburg Concerto No. 4, both of which have been broadcast nationwide.

The subsequent years saw Bach Akademie Australia consolidate its growing reputation as one of Australia's outstanding period instrument ensembles by further sold out performances in Sydney and Canberra to critical acclaim. 2019 saw the formation of the Bach Akademie Australia Choir which performed to great acclaim with the orchestra in their debut performance of Bach's 'Ascension Oratorio' in March of that year.



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Our plans for 2023 will most definitely whet your appetite for the amazing music of Johann Sebastian Bach! However, running an arts organisation such as ours presents a huge financial challenge.

We invite you to consider joining our generous family of individual donors by either purchasing a ticket to one of our forthcoming events, or making a donation to support our work and help us to bring the wonderful music of J.S. Bach to life. Unless you wish to remain anonymous, your contribution will be acknowledged on our website and in our concert programs.

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With thoughtful, wellresearched performances and an elegantly constructed program, Easton and Bach Akademie Australia offered an opportunity to really dig down deep into Bach's words and music – a profound and rewarding experience.

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