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BACH 2 THE FUTURE (VOL.1)
FENELLA HUMPHREYS *violin*

"... an interesting, diverse programme ... Fenella Humphreys shapes the music with skill and humour ... an enjoyable and accomplished CD."

BBC Music Magazine, Instrumental Choice ★★★★★

"... an intriguing project by violinist Fenella Humphreys, who is commissioning new British companion pieces to Bach's six iconic sonatas and partitas. Here she performs the first three commissions, alongside a spirited yet unhurried account of Bach's E major Partita."

The Guardian

CHAMPS HILL
RECORDS

Vol. 2

BACH²

THE FUTURE

WORKS FOR
SOLO VIOLIN

J. S. Bach
Sally Beamish
Peter Maxwell Davies
Jean Sibelius
Igor Stravinsky
Adrian Sutton
Eugène Ysaÿe

FENELLA
HUMPHREYS



I FOREWORD

It's incredibly hard to put into words just how much this project means to me, and how completely it's taken over my life for four years – from a slightly crazy idea late one night, through to having now commissioned, performed and recorded this extraordinary tome of six new partner works to Bach's Sonatas and Partitas. When I started out, I never honestly believed most of these wonderful composers would consider writing for me. As you can hear, each of them in fact embraced the project with real imagination and generosity of spirit, creating between them a brilliantly varied set of works celebrating the genius of Bach, the richness and diversity of contemporary British music, and really the absolute joy of the violin.

Heartfelt thanks to Mary and David Bowerman for their kindness and support of the project, to Matthew Bennett and Dave Rowell for their skill and patience, and to Alexander Van Ingen and Matt Buchanan at Champs Hill Records. Also to the hundreds of people who made the commissions possible, including the Arts Council, RVW Trust, PRS for Music Foundation, Cruach Trust, Nicolas Boas Trust, Fidelio Trust, Ambache Trust, Ida Carroll Trust, Moira and George Cyriax, Martin and Dorinde Lovett, Lucia Smith, George Vass at Presteigne Festival, Alasdair Nicolson at St. Magnus Festival, Charlotte Caird at The Forge, and Aldeburgh Music. And finally, thank you Sally, Adrian, Max, Piers, Gordon and Cheryl for your wonderful music!

The new works on this disc were commissioned with the aid of the following organisations:



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



RVWTrust

TRACK LISTING

	ADRIAN SUTTON (1967–)	
	ARPEGGIARE VARIATIONS	
1	<i>i</i> Tema	02'33
2	<i>ii</i> Assertivo	01'33
3	<i>iii</i> Tarantella	01'22
4	<i>iv</i> Lento	04'16
5	<i>v</i> Ritorno	02'37
	EUGÈNE YSAÏE (1858–1931)	
6	SONATA IN D MINOR, Op.27 No.3 'BALLADE'	07'26
	SALLY BEAMISH (1956–)	
	INTRADA E FUGA	
7	<i>i</i> Intrada	04'11
8	<i>ii</i> Fuga	07'04
	JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)	
	SONATA No.3 IN C MAJOR, BWV1005	
9	<i>i</i> Adagio	04'52
10	<i>ii</i> Fuga	09'51
11	<i>iii</i> Largo	03'50
12	<i>iv</i> Allegro Assai	02'45
	PETER MAXWELL DAVIES (1934–2016)	
13	SONATINA FOR VIOLIN ALONE, Op.334	11'28
	IGOR STRAVINSKY (1882–1971)	
14	ÉLÉGIE FOR SOLO VIOLIN	06'10
	JEAN SIBELIUS (1865–1957)	
15	EN GLAD MUSIKANT, JS70	02'04

Total playing time: **72'02**

Produced by Matthew Bennett

Engineered by Dave Rowell

Edited by Matthew Bennett

Recorded on 29th–30th September and 19th & 21st October 2015 in the Music Room, Champs Hill, West Sussex, UK

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PROGRAMME NOTE

This second disc of music from the *Bach to the Future* project set up by Fenella Humphreys contains the final three new works for solo violin by British composers, together with a further sonata by the Belgian virtuoso Eugène Ysaÿe and two brief works by Sibelius and Stravinsky, all placed within the context of Bach's magisterial Sonata no.3 in C major.

In the spirit of Bach, all of the works on this recording address in some way the question of counterpoint, whether explicitly or implicitly. Adrian Sutton's *Arpeggiare Variations* (2015) are an exploration of the possibilities of the arpeggio. This gesture, so natural to the violin and so characteristic of much of its literature, whether "erudite" or popular, forms the basis of what is really a set of variations. The theme, arpeggiated naturally, is taken on a series of "journeys" which not only endeavour to seek out every expressive and constructional possibility of the arpeggio, but suggest points of contact with other music. Bach is certainly present in the deft homage to him by Sutton's contrapuntal skill; there is also a stylisation of a tarantella that vividly suggests the dizzy twirling of the dancer until she falls to exhaustion, while the meditative "Lento" covers a wide range of expressive territory, from barcarolle-like reminiscences to a cadenza, and fragments of contrapuntal dialogue. With the "Ritorno" equilibrium is restored, and the arpeggio comes to rest.

Ysaÿe's Six Sonatas were composed for six contemporary violin virtuosos, and revived the idea of writing polyphonically for the solo violin, in addition to exploiting to the maximum the instrument's expressive capacity. The third was dedicated to the Romanian violinist and composer Georges Enescu, the others being written for Jacques Thibaud, Joseph Szigeti, Fritz Kreisler, Mathieu Crickboom and Manuel Quiroga. The composer was inspired to write these works after hearing Szigeti playing Bach's G minor Sonata for solo violin, with the idea of making use of all the huge range of technical possibilities of the instrument in the interests of

poetic expression. In the magnificent Sonata no.3, subtitled “Ballade”, Ysaÿe wrote a work that sounds like a continuous narrative thread, but a thread that follows a journey of completely unexpected twists and turns. Notionally in D minor, the composer’s pervasive use of chromaticism and inverted chords frequently suspends any sense of being anchored to a particular tonality. It is also rhythmically very rich and unpredictable (there is a substantial stretch of 5/4 time, for example, and use of quintuplets and septuplets), and Ysaÿe loses no opportunity to exploit the violin’s contrapuntal possibilities.

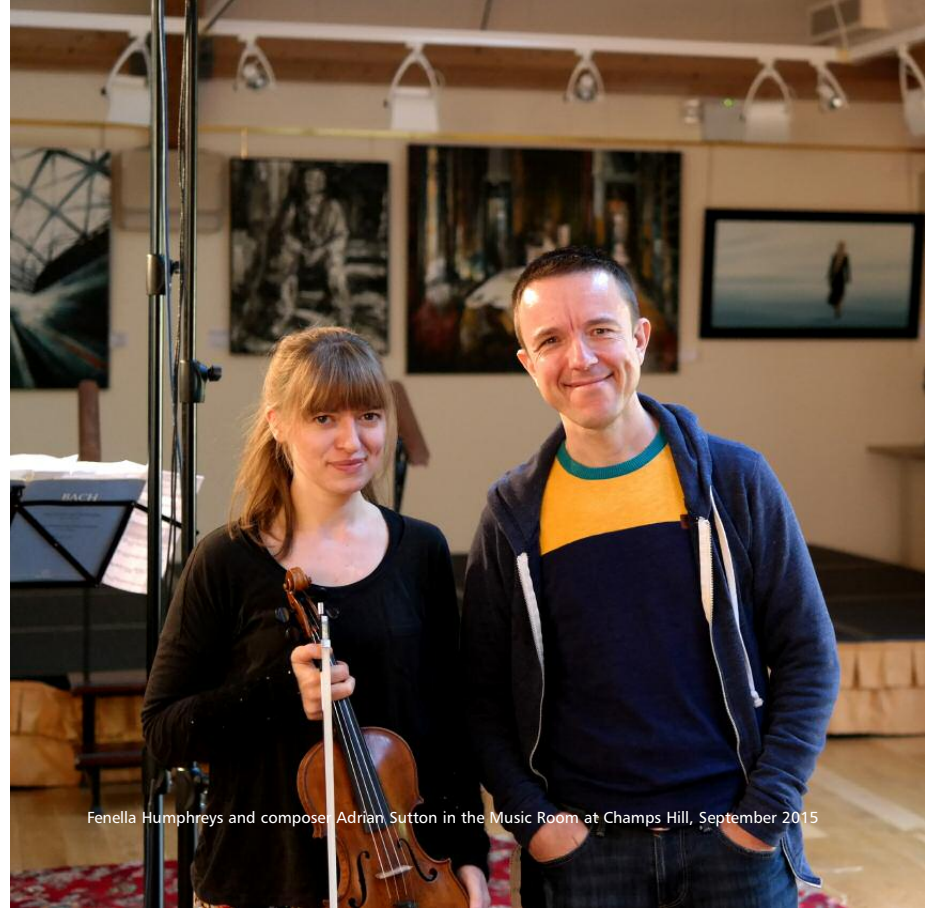
While counterpoint also naturally abounds in the Fugue from Sally Beamish’s *Intrada e Fuga*, the kernel of the work is the folk-inflected material built gradually up from the intense oscillation around one note – a very high A – with which the *Intrada* begins, and which returns at the end of the *Fugue*. Its drone-accompanied style suggests the Hardanger fiddle music of Norway: the composer notes that she had been listening to the fiddle playing of Nils Økland, and points out the appropriateness of this connection given that the work’s first performance would take place in the Norwegian-built St Magnus Cathedral, in Orkney. Indeed, Beamish’s music in general has many connections with the cultures of northern Europe. The *Fugue* itself is dance-like to begin with, but over the course of the development of the fugal dialogue it contains many changes of atmosphere; it also makes considerable use of harmonics, and triple and quadruple-stopping. Beamish says that it is directly inspired by the Bach *A minor Fugue*, “using the same time signature at the outset, and similar motifs. I wanted to set myself a compositional challenge, and chose a 3-voice fugue, as Bach did, using inversion, augmentation, and other fugal devices. After a virtuosic climax, the music of the *Intrada* returns, fading into the silence from which it emerged. This last statement of the opening theme is in retrograde – i.e. played backwards.”

The set of works by Bach now known as the “Six Sonatas and Partitas”, but originally called “Sei Solo a Violino senza Basso accompagnato Libro Primo”, was written by 1720 in Cöthen, but not published until 1802, by Simrock, 52 years after the composer’s death. The third Sonata, in C major, BWV 1005, is a four-movement work whose centre is one of the most remarkable fugues in history. The opening *Adagio* is effectively a prelude for the fugue that follows, characterised by a persistent dotted pattern that concentrates attention on the movement’s extraordinary richness of texture; the *Fugue* itself, one of the longest and most complex of any of Bach’s fugues, is built on the chorale *Komm, heiliger Geist, Herre Gott*, with a descending chromatic line as a countersubject. At approximately the halfway point, however, Bach writes “al reverso”, and both subject and countersubject are heard as an inverted palindrome, the countersubject climbing instead of descending. The opening fugue is recapitulated to form an architecturally perfect intellectual and musical behemoth. The *Largo* that follows is utterly different, a reflective two-voiced movement of sustained lyricism, and this massive Sonata ends with a flowing *Allegro assai* that, while spun from a single, scale-like motif, is full of implicit part-writing such that the listener seems to hear a two or even three-way “conversation”.

The *Sonatina for Violin Alone* by the late Sir Peter Maxwell Davies was composed in 2015 and is specifically modelled on the Bach C major Sonata. There is nothing remotely “neo-baroque” about the work, however; while it reworks certain gestures from the Bach (obvious from the reference to the dotted rhythms of Bach’s *Adagio* at the very opening), it does so very audibly in Davies’s own musical language – as was always the case with his frequent references to the music of the past – and within the context of a reflective, predominantly melancholy narrative. The work is dedicated to the memory of Jack Rendall.

Stravinsky's *Elegy* (*Élégie*) was written in 1944, and bears the inscription "composée à l'intention de Germain Prévost, pour être jouée à la mémoire de Alphonse Onnou fondateur du Quatuor Pro Arte". Onnou had begun the famous Quartet, which exists to this day, in 1912, and was its first violinist until his death. The *Elegy* is a beautiful and mournful – even anguished – tribute, cast in three sections, the second of which suggests a fugue, by means of implied part-writing. The violinist plays with a mute throughout. Apparently a complete contrast, Sibelius's *En glad musikant* ("A happy musician") is in fact another example of extreme economy hiding complexity. Written in 1924–5, it is a song-like piece with subtle decorative touches and making use of double-stopping throughout. Written above the notes in the manuscript is a poem by the Swedish composer Ture Rangström (1884–1947), who was profoundly inspired by Sibelius's work.

Ivan Moody



Fenella Humphreys and composer Adrian Sutton in the Music Room at Champs Hill, September 2015

FENELLA HUMPHREYS

With playing described in the press as 'unforgettable' and 'a wonder', violinist Fenella Humphreys enjoys a busy career combining chamber music and solo work. She has broadcast for the BBC, Classic FM, and German, Canadian, Australian and Korean radio and TV. Her first concerto recording for Dutton Epoch with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and Martin Yates was released recently to great critical acclaim, including selection as 'Orchestral Choice CD' in a 5-star review in the *BBC Music Magazine*. A number of eminent British composers have written works for Fenella both in her own right and as a former member of the Lawson Trio. Her project *Bach to the Future*, commissioning a set of six new solo violin works by leading British composers Cheryl Frances-Hoad, Gordon Crosse, Piers Hellawell, Adrian Sutton, Sally Beamish and Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, has seen performances at Aldeburgh, St. Magnus International Festival, Ryedale Festival and Presteigne Festival. Concertmaster of the Deutsche Kammerakademie, she also enjoys guest leading and directing. Fenella's teachers have included Sidney Griller CBE, Itzhak Rashkovsky, Ida Bieler and David Takeno, studying at the Purcell School, Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and the Robert-Schumann-Hochschule in Düsseldorf graduating with the highest attainable marks. Fenella plays a beautiful violin from the circle of Peter Guarneri of Venice, kindly on loan from Jonathan Sparey.

www.fenellahumphreys.com

