



CHAMPS HILL  
RECORDS

Vol. 1



**BACH**<sup>2</sup>  
THE FUTURE

WORKS FOR  
SOLO VIOLIN

J. S. Bach  
Cheryl Frances-Hoad  
Eugène Ysaÿe  
Gordon Crosse  
Heinrich Biber  
Piers Hellawell  
Cyril Scott

**FENELLA  
HUMPHREYS**

[www.champshillrecords.co.uk](http://www.champshillrecords.co.uk)

## I FOREWORD

One thing that my first violin teacher said to me has always haunted me - no violinist can be really good until they've performed Bach's 6 Sonatas and Partitas for unaccompanied violin. Of course it isn't true, but it still bothered me, and so a couple of years ago I decided it was about time I learnt the movements I had always shied away from, and performed the entire set. It was when I was looking into repertoire to programme alongside them that I first realised how comparatively little British solo violin music there is. There was obviously nothing I could do about composers like Britten, Tippett and Walton who had left us no solo works, but as I have always loved playing new music and working with composers, it seemed to make sense to commission some new pieces. After being convinced by Cheryl Frances-Hoad over a cup of tea at Paddington Station that it wasn't too crazy an idea, I asked six incredible composers each to write a companion piece to a specific Sonata or Partita. Not wanting to stifle the composers, I simply told them which work their new piece would partner and let them respond in a way that worked best for them. Throughout the project, it has been a real privilege to develop musical relationships with the composers, and have the opportunity to perform these wonderful new works written with my playing in mind.

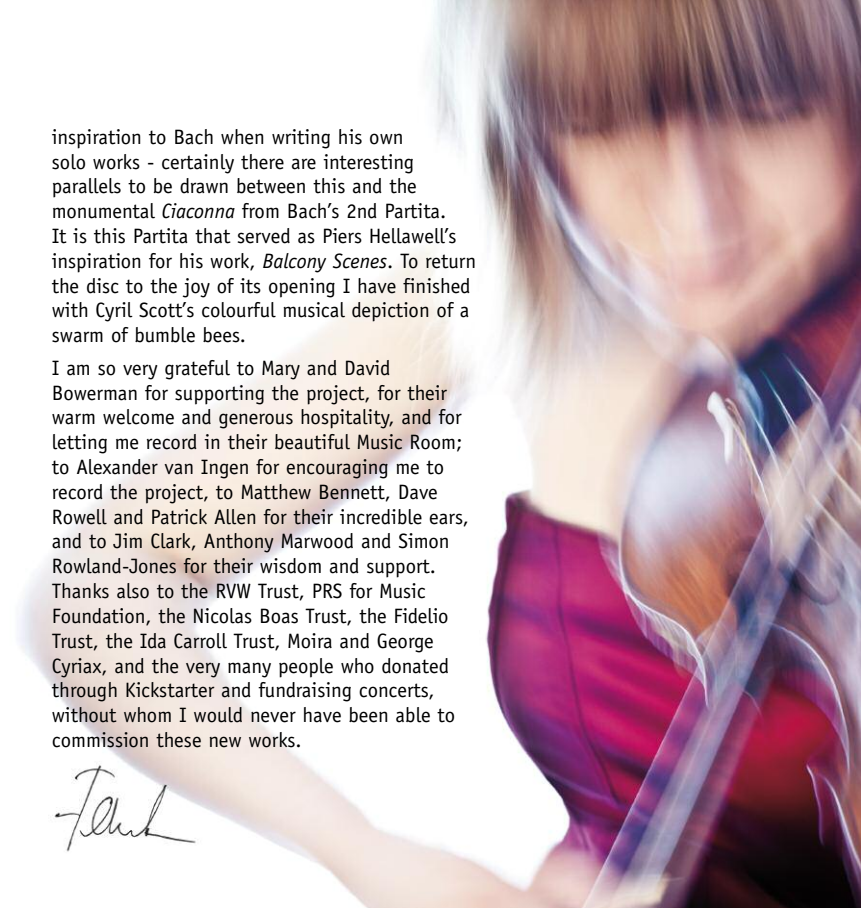
This disc begins with Cheryl Frances-Hoad and Eugène Ysaÿe's responses to Bach's E major Partita framing the work itself - Cheryl's music reflects the joy and dance-like qualities of Bach's music, while Ysaÿe juxtaposes cheerful Bach quotations with the *Dies Irae* plainchant. *The Furies* of Ysaÿe's final movement lead on to the fury of an Orkney wind, imagined by Gordon Crosse in his work inspired by Bach's 1st Sonata. The next track, Biber's mesmerising Passacaglia is one of the earliest known works for unaccompanied violin, and generally thought to have been an

inspiration to Bach when writing his own solo works - certainly there are interesting parallels to be drawn between this and the monumental *Ciaccona* from Bach's 2nd Partita. It is this Partita that served as Piers Hellawell's inspiration for his work, *Balcony Scenes*. To return the disc to the joy of its opening I have finished with Cyril Scott's colourful musical depiction of a swarm of bumble bees.

I am so very grateful to Mary and David Bowerman for supporting the project, for their warm welcome and generous hospitality, and for letting me record in their beautiful Music Room; to Alexander van Ingen for encouraging me to record the project, to Matthew Bennett, Dave Rowell and Patrick Allen for their incredible ears, and to Jim Clark, Anthony Marwood and Simon Rowland-Jones for their wisdom and support. Thanks also to the RVW Trust, PRS for Music Foundation, the Nicolas Boas Trust, the Fidelio Trust, the Ida Carroll Trust, Moira and George Cyriax, and the very many people who donated through Kickstarter and fundraising concerts, without whom I would never have been able to commission these new works.



Piers Hellawell



TRACK LISTING

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)  
**PARTITA NO.3 IN E MAJOR BWV1006**

1	Preludio	03'36
2	Loure	02'38
3	Gavotte en Rondeau	02'56
4	Menuet I & II	05'25
5	Bourée	00'45
6	Gigue	01'00

CHERYL FRANCES-HOAD (1980– )  
**SUITE NO.1**

7	Adagietto	03'17
8	Allegro scherzando	00'47
9	Adagio cantabile	03'34
10	Allegro molto	01'16
11	Allegro giocoso	02'13

EUGÈNE YSAÏE (1858–1931)  
**SONATA FOR SOLO VIOLIN NO.2, OP.27**

12	Obsession - Prelude: poco vivace	02'42
13	Malinconia - Poco lento	02'53
14	Danse des ombres - Sarabande (Lento)	04'17
15	Les Furies - Allegro furioso	03'16

GORDON CROSSE (1937– )  
**ORKNEY DREAMING**

16	<i>i</i> Moderato	05'35
17	<i>ii</i> Fugue	02'34
18	<i>iii</i> Andante	03'01
19	<i>iv</i> Allegro	01'57

HEINRICH IGNAZ FRANZ BIBER (1644–1704)  
**PASSACAGLIA FROM ROSENKRANZ SONATA**

20		10'10
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PIERS HELLAWELL (1956– )  
**BALCONY SCENES**

21	Fantasia I: Broad, unhurried	04'14
22	Bicinium I	02'44
23	Bicinium II: Lento - Prestissimo, volando	02'23
24	Fantasia II: Ad Lib, rubato	04'38

CYRIL SCOTT (1879–1970)  
**BUMBLEBEES**

25		01'22
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Total playing time: **79'16**

Produced by Matthew Bennett [tracks 1–6, 16–20]

Produced by Patrick Allen [tracks 7–15, 21–25]

Engineered by Dave Rowell

Edited by Matthew Bennett

Recorded on 29th–30th October 2014 [tracks 1–6, 16–20], 6th–7th November 2014 [tracks 7–15, 21–25]  
 in the Music Room, Champs Hill, West Sussex, UK

Cover and foreword photos by Gareth Barton

Executive Producer for Champs Hill Records: Alexander Van Ingen

Label Manager for Champs Hill Records: John Dickinson

If Bach is the presiding spirit in this recording, the variety and invention of the entire sequence is equally an homage to the idea of counterpoint (and invention in general) and, at the same time, to the huge expressive and technical capacities of the solo violin. The three British composers whose music is featured wrote their works as part of the “Bach to the Future” project set up by Fenella Humphreys, which has commissioned six composers to write new pieces to be premièred during 2014 and 2015.

It is Bach, therefore, who begins the proceedings. His Partita No.3 in E major, BWV 1006, is the last in the set of works now known as the *Six Sonatas and Partitas*, but originally called *Sei Solo a Violino senza Basso accompagnato Libro Primo*, written by 1720 in Cöthen, but not published until 1802, twelve years after the composer’s death.

The third Partita is probably the best known of the set, its tone set by the shining opening *Preludio*, characterized by almost constant strings of semiquavers. This is followed by a majestic *Loure*, a slow French dance also known as a *gigue lente*, characterised by dotted rhythms, and then a *Gavotte en rondeau*, in which Bach turns the first part of the normally binary gigue into a refrain (and a very memorable one). There are two *Menuet*, the first gentle and elegant, the second more rustic, making reference to drones. The final two dances are a *Bourrée* and a *Gigue*, the former a lively, syncopated piece, and the latter a flowing, binary form dance of Italian rather than French style.

The only composer featured on this recording to have lived earlier than Bach is Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber. He was born just over 40 years before Bach, in fact, and enormously expanded the possibilities of the solo violin, thanks to his own extraordinary technique. The collection of *Rosenkranz Sonatas*, also known as the *Rosary* or *Mystery Sonatas*, was written in about 1676, in honour of the 15 *Mysteries*

*of the Virgin Rosary*. There are sixteen of these sonatas, for violin and harpsichord, but the set ends with an extraordinary unaccompanied *Passacaglia* in G minor, the only movement except the first to use the instrument’s standard tuning. Biber was particularly interested in the effects of *scordatura*, whereby the violin is tuned differently and consequently produces different chords and timbres from those arising from the standard tuning. The *Passacaglia* has been considered, with justice, to be the most outstanding work for solo violin before the Bach *Chaconne*, and is a *tour de force*, showing not only Biber’s capacity for rich melodic invention over a constantly repeating bass, but his interest in virtuosic polyphonic writing for the instrument.

Eugène Ysaÿe, the Belgian composer, was also renowned as a violin virtuoso. His Six Sonatas were each dedicated to a contemporary violinist; the second was for Jacques Thibaud, a friend whom he greatly admired (the others were dedicated to Joseph Szigeti, George Enescu, Fritz Kreisler, Mathieu Crickboom and Manuel Quiroga).

The Sonata opens with a remarkable movement entitled *Obsession*, which establishes an absolutely direct link to Bach, by quoting from the *Prelude* of the third *Partita*, and also quotes from the *Dies irae* chant from the *Requiem Mass*; “obsessive” is precisely the word to describe the music’s manic character. It is followed by *Malinconia*, a slower, simpler movement whose yearning melodic line perfectly suggests the melancholy of its title. The *Dies irae* returns again as the basis for the theme of the *Sarabande*, which is constructed as a set of six highly characterised variations, with the theme first announced by the violin playing pizzicato. The colourful final movement, *Les Furies*, which has recourse to the *Dies irae* chant throughout, suggests, perhaps, a furious rant against death, though the conclusiveness of the final cadence would indicate that there is little to be done.

Cyril Scott, born 21 years after Ysaÿe, was a prolific and inventive composer. He studied, at the end of the 19th century, at the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt-am-Main with Iwan Knorr (1853–1916), and together with his fellow students Henry Balfour Gardiner, Percy Grainger, Roger Quilter and Norman O'Neill, made up what was known as the Frankfurt Group. Eugene Goossens described him as “the father of modern British music”. Though for a time unremarked, his music has been substantially rediscovered in recent years. His brief solo violin work, *Bumblebees* (or *Die Hummein* in German) was published in 1928 by Schott, and dedicated to May Harrison. It is in some ways comparable in intention to the famous *Flight of the Bumblebee* by Rimsky-Korsakov, but cleverly suggests the presence of more than one bee by the use of double-stopping.

Gordon Crosse's *Orkney Dreaming* is a simultaneous homage to Bach and to Orkney. It is not obsessive in the way that Ysaÿe is, but Crosse says of the work that he “thought about (dreamed about) Bach all the time as the islands worked their friendly magic”, and mentions too the Bachian structure of the work, which was begun before he had actually visited the islands, which contradicted his previously-formed image of them, with their “sweet green fertility and a landscape which gave one space but never left one feeling lonely or abandoned.” There is certainly a dreamy quality to the first movement, *Moderato*, which is dispelled as though by a refreshing gust of wind by the following Fugue. The *Andante* is ruminative, but more “anchored” than the *Moderato*, and the final *Allegro* is a proper dance, perhaps what Bach might have written if he had wanted to compose a Scottish Pastoral.

Bachian characteristics are also to be found in some sense in *Balcony Scenes* by Piers Hellawell, which were written for Fenella Humphreys in 2014 and which are, so to speak, an examination of the idea of counterpoint, or dialogue. The work consists of two *fantasias* and two *bicinia*. *Bicinium* denotes a two-part

contrapuntal passage (it is most frequently associated, at least by students of counterpoint, with Lassus), and here Hellawell exploits the dialogue between lower and upper (balcony) levels that gives the set its name. The *Fantasias* try, says the composer, “to maximize the register contrasts within the violin and, even, sometimes, to create the idea of a ‘bass register’ for the instrument”. He also notes that the “opening gesture of *Fantasia I*, which recurs to open *Fantasia II*, spells out the name ‘Fenella’”.

The youngest composer represented on this disc, Cheryl Frances-Hoad, wrote her Suite No.1 in direct response to Bach's Partita No.3. She says of it, “rather than base my work on any specific motives or harmonies, I simply listened and listened to the Bach, identified what really appealed to me, then tried to forget Bach's music and write a work which had similar feelings, melodic shapes and moods, or that employed a similar striking violin technique (for example)”. These connections take different forms, and, as the composer suggests, are not generally really identifiable with specific aspects of the Bach, with a few exceptions, such as the use of the E string in the opening *Adagietto*, and the use of the drone, in the *Allegro molto*, referring to the brief appearance of a drone in the second of Bach's *Menuets*.

Ivan Moody

## 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 Guaneri of Venice, kindly on loan from Jonathan Sparey.

[www.fenellahumphreys.com](http://www.fenellahumphreys.com)

