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A "New Orthophonic" High Fidelity Recording

J. S. BACH
J. K. F. FISCHER

LANDOWSKA THE ART OF THE HARPSICHORD





THE ART OF THE HARPSICHORD

Wanda Landowska

Harpsichord Pleyel

PATRIMONIO UC

SIDE 1

J. S. Bach Partita No. 2, in C Minor

(Schmieder 826)

*Sinfonia—Allemande—Courante—Sarabande—
Rondeau—Capriccio*

The Suites by Bach known as the *French Suites* were so called because of the supposed finesse of French *écriture*. And yet, the *English Suites* are more French than the French ones, and the *Partitas* which have been claimed as the *German Suites*, are the most French of them all.

The *Partita in C Minor* is Bach's most eloquent homage to French music. It is not only a homage to the music, but to the tradition and style of French interpretation. "We write differently from what we play," says Couperin in his *Art de toucher le Clavecin*. Bach proves and demonstrates this postulate in this Partita.

The *Sinfonia* opens with an Overture à la Française, condensed into seven measures. A *recit* follows, gentle and expressive, which evokes an *oboe d'amore*, and the *Sinfonia* ends with a powerful fugue in two voices.

The *Allemande*, the *Courante* and the *Sarabande* bring us close to Couperin. In the *Rondeau* and *Capriccio*, Bach amuses himself royally with jumps from one hand to the other. One feels he is in high spirit, and the outburst even increases in the *Capriccio*.

Bach himself published the six Partitas, one by one. The second, in C minor, first appeared in 1727.

SIDE 2

Band 1—J. S. Bach Capriccio on the Departure of His Beloved Brother

(Schmieder 992)

*Arioso—Andante—Adagissimo—Aria di Postiglione—
Fuga all'imitazione della cornetta di Postiglione*

This piece, originally called *Capriccio sopra la lontananza del suo fratello diletissimo*, was composed by Bach—then nineteen years old—at Arnstadt, in honor of his older brother, Johann-Jakob, who enlisted in 1704 as oboist in the army band of the Swedish King, Charles XII.

In the *Arioso*, tender and graceful, his friends try, with cajoleries, to persuade him to abandon the voyage.

The *Andante-fugato* which follows is a polyphonic description of the various misfortunes which could happen to him en route.

The *Adagissimo* is a general lament of his friends. The descending chromatic bass, so dear to Bach and his predecessors, reminds us of the B Minor Mass.

But Johann-Jakob is adamant and his friends wish him farewell. Then comes the *Aria di Postiglione* followed by a spirited fugue, on the imitation of the postillion's horn, which overflows with gaiety.

Bach composed the *Capriccio*—which is almost unique in his work—under the influence of Kuhnau whose descriptive *Biblical Stories*, in sonata form, were composed four years before.

Band 2—J. K. F. Fischer Passacaglia in D Minor

Johann Kasper Ferdinand Fischer, also famous as organist and harpsichordist, was one of the first—as well as Georg

Muffat—to introduce into Germany the French ornaments.

The *Passacaglia*, Fischer's most beautiful piece, belongs to his *Musikalisches Blumen Büchlein*. It begins in the low register of the harpsichord whose gravity is intensified by the somber tonality of D minor. Restrained at first, the passion grows, rises and blazes out in a theme whose resemblance to that of Bach's *Chaconne* for unaccompanied violin—also in D minor—strikes us. Let us not be surprised, Bach not only knew the works of Fischer, but also used his themes in certain fugues of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*.

Band 3—J. S. Bach Fantasia in C Minor

(Schmieder 906)

The autograph of this *Fantasia* is in Dresden. It would be important for every interpreter to know it because it reveals the method of executing certain ornaments which Bach—instead of indicating them by signs—wrote out in notes. This case is rare in Bach's works and an eloquent lesson.

The *Fantasia* can be played on the modern piano, but the passages for crossed hands obviously call for the two keyboards of the harpsichord.

The character of this *Fantasia* is stormy. The two voices run, sometimes in contrary motion, sometimes together, sometimes they clash and interweave—magnificent effects intended for the two keyboards.

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Lakeville, Connecticut
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PRINTED IN U. S. A.

This is an RCA Victor "New Orthophonic" High Fidelity Recording. It is distinguished by these characteristics: 1. Complete frequency range. 2. Ideal dynamic range plus clarity and brilliance. 3. Constant fidelity from outside to inside of record. 4. Improved quiet surfaces.

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