



CHANNEL CLASSICS

CCS 43721

J.S. Bach

SONATAS FOR VIOLA (DA GAMBA)
AND HARPSICHORD BWV 1027-1029

Marie Stockmarr Becker VIOLA
Ilaria Macedonio HARPSICHORD



Marie Stockmarr Becker has undertaken a varied and versatile musical path performing on both modern and period instruments. She studied modern viola at the Conservatoire National de Région de Rueil-Malmaison, France and at Musik-Akademie der Stadt Basel, Switzerland, where she completed a master's degree in 2011. She discovered her passion for early music in Basel when studying baroque music as her minor in the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis. Later, she completed a master's degree in early music at the Royal Danish Music Academy in Copenhagen.

An experienced orchestra- and ensemble musician, Marie has performed with symphony and opera orchestras including Saarländisches Staatsorchester, Copenhagen Phil and the Danish National Symphony Orchestra. Currently she is co-principal violist in Basel Sinfonietta. In that context she has played many new works and enjoyed collaborations with artists such as Laurie Anderson and Heinz Holliger.

She regularly plays with several early music ensembles in Scandinavia including Concerto Copenhagen and Camerata Øresund. As an ensemble- and orchestra player, she has toured throughout Europe, Japan, China and the U.S.

Marie is extensively devoting herself to chamber music and is especially interested in the very sparse early repertoire composed for the viola da braccio. She has adventured herself into anonymous 17th century music for violin, viola and basso continuo with Ensemble Rost, early 19th century music with Biedermeier Trio and contemporary music on period instruments with the group Nordic Affect. As a chamber musician she has guested Wiener Konzerthaus, MA Festival Brugge, Oude Muziek Utrecht, Skanu Mežs Festival Riga, l'Architasto Festival Rome, Mengi Iceland, American Bach Summer Festival San Francisco, SUNY Albany and Spectrum New York.

Ilaria Macedonio was born in Assisi into a family almost entirely composed of professional musicians. Beginning her piano studies at the age of seven, Ilaria won first prize at the Settenote Music Competition in Arrone aged eight. Since then, Ilaria has been a prizewinner at numerous competitions including the Piccole Mani Music Competition in Perugia, the Concorso Musicale Città di Castelnuovo Garfagnana and the Concorso Hyperion in Rome.

In 2006 Ilaria gave her debut as a soloist with orchestra, performing Mozart's Piano Concerto K414 with the Ensemble Le Metamorfosi Musicali in Umbria and Lazio, and later went on to study for her bachelor's at the G. Briccialdi Musical Institute in Terni where she graduated with first class honours. In 2013 Ilaria won the Erasmus selection for a study exchange to Copenhagen, Denmark. In 2014 she enrolled at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen to study for a Master's degree in Early Music under the guidance of Ketil Haugsand. During the three-year study period in Denmark she became certified as a Danish Language Speaker. Whilst studying at the Royal Danish Academy of Music, Ilaria performed as a continuo harpsichord player with several chamber groups and ensembles. Ilaria has attended masterclasses, workshops and seminars with Andrew Lawrence-King, Peter Spissky, Imbi Tarum, Alfredo Bernardini, Lars Ulrik Mortensen, Ton Koopman and Ketil Are Haugsand. In 2017/18 Ilaria studied at the Royal College of Music on the Artist Diploma Course with Jane Chapman and Terence Charlston. In London she took every opportunity to immerse herself in chamber music projects, and she performed as a continuo player at the Greenwich Music Festival 2017, as a soloist at the Southbank Centre and at the Mottisfont National Trust Museum in May 2018.



Personal note

Our first meeting as a duo came as a collaboration on Bach's three sonatas for viola da gamba and harpsichord. This was back in 2013, when we were both studying early music at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen. Since then, we have played together in many different contexts, both as a duo and with various ensembles and baroque orchestras. In duo, we have performed mostly in Italy and Denmark, participating in concert series including Onsdagskonserterne and Early Monday in Copenhagen. Since our first activities together, our paths have gone in different directions: Ilaria went to study at the Royal College of Music in London and later moved back to Italy, where she is currently based. Marie continued her activities in the area around Copenhagen and southern Sweden, working with various early music ensembles in Scandinavia.

No matter where our paths have led us, Bach's music has continuously brought us together. We believe this is because his music has a very special meaning for both of us. It is therefore an immense pleasure for us to present our debut album of Bach's three sonatas for viola da gamba and harpsichord.

Even though these sonatas were originally composed for viola da gamba, we have approached the music with the thought that violists in Bach's time might have performed them as well. One argument in favor of this reasoning is that the repertoire for viola da braccio (directly translated "arm viola" to distinguish it from the viola da gamba, "leg viola") was very sparse in the baroque period. However, the interest in the instrument was growing, as we can see in compositions like J. S. Bach's 6th Brandenburg concerto from 1718 and G. P. Telemann's legendary viola concerto in G Major composed around 1716-1721.

Despite the fact that J. S. Bach loved playing the viola – as C.P.E. Bach mentioned in a letter to Nikolaus Forkel from the end of 1774 – he only assigned a more soloistic role

to the viola on very rare occasions. The viola was clearly regarded as a *ripieno* – an ensembleinstrument with a harmonic key role rather than a solo instrument.

Taking all these elements into account, we could easily imagine viola players – or even the composer himself – playing these viola da gamba sonatas on the viola and with this perspective in mind, we have taken our approach to the works.

The three sonatas BWV 1027-1029 are milestones in the viol repertoire. Bach composed them in a pure trio sonata style and seems to have consciously explored the special sound and timbre of the viol rather than its idiomatic possibilities. For this reason the sonatas are particularly adaptable to the viola da braccio, even though the instrument differs from the viol in many important aspects like for instance tuning, bow grip and sound production. The contrapuntal style, in which the viol often acts as the middle voice, brilliantly highlights the contrasting characters of the string and the keyboard instruments, while giving them wonderful occasions to merge in very subtle ways. Playing this music, it very early became clear to us that the trio sonata style and the different characters of our instruments are key elements – representing both challenges and opportunities – in our approach to these chamber music works.

It has been a huge pleasure and a rewarding experience to embark on this chamber musical journey through Bach's masterpieces, and it is all the more a pleasure for us to share the joy by releasing this album in collaboration with Channel Classics!

Marie Stockmarr Becker and Ilaria Macedonio

The circumstances and the period in which Bach composed his three sonatas for viola da gamba and obbligato harpsichord have been subject to extensive research and discussion. The only preserved source is an autograph of the sonata BWV 1027. For this reason, the exact date of composition of the three sonatas cannot be precisely established. However, the works are estimated to date from around 1730-1740.

The preserved manuscript of the sonata BWV 1027 in G major consists of parts written by Bach's hand around the early 1740s. This sonata also exists in a version for two flutes and continuo from about the same period (catalogue number BWV 1039) – this clearly indicates that the sonatas could be played in various instrumentations due to their contrapuntal rather than idiomatic style.

The period of composition of the sonata BWV 1028 in D major is less evident to establish since the only sources passed on to our time consist in copies dating from the second half of the eighteenth century. Three of the sources assign the upper part to the violin, which indicates that this sonata was probably arranged and rewritten several times for different occasions. Furthermore, the four movements seem to differ stylistically – some having a favour of the *galant* style – which can also point to a long and complex development of this sonata towards its actual form.

The sonata BWV 1029 in G minor is for good reasons considered one of Bach's chamber music masterpieces. This sonata in three movements is composed in a *concertante* style integrating elements from the Italian solo concerto (e.g. unisons and other orchestral effects) with the strict trio sonata style. Bach masterfully conciliates a grand and expressive orchestral style with a stringent counterpoint – an impressive musical accomplishment that beautifully crowns the total work of these three sonatas.

Marie Stockmarr Becker



photo: Ragnheiður Jónsdóttir

Colophon

Production

Channel Classics Records

Producer, recording engineer, editing, mastering

Ragnheiður Jónsdóttir

Cover design

Ad van der Kouwe, Manifesta, Rotterdam

Photography

Julie Malmstrøm

Liner notes

Marie Stockmarr Becker / Ilaria
Macedonio

Recording location

Garnison Church, Copenhagen, Denmark

Recording date

25-29 February 2020

Technical information

Microphones

DPA 4006A

Digital converter

Hapi/Merging Technologies- DXD

Editing software

Pyramix

Cables

XLR / Thomann

Mastering Room

Speakers

Neumann KH 120 A

Amplifiers

Sennheiser HDV 820



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Best wishes,
Jared Sacks

Founder, Producer, Engineer at Channel Classics Records

Johann Sebastian Bach

(1685-1750)

SONATAS FOR VIOLA (DA GAMBA)
AND HARPSICHORD BWV 1027-1029

Marie Stockmarr Becker VIOLA
Ilaria Macedonio HARPSICHORD

Instruments

Marie Stockmarr Becker – viola by Joseph Hill, London, 1776. Bow by Eitan Hoffer, 2019, copy after an English bow from c. 1720.

Ilaria Macedonio – double-manual harpsichord copy by Joop Klinkhamer, Amsterdam, 1990 after Johann Heinrich Harrass, Thüringen, Germany, c. 1700.

SONATA BWV 1027 IN G MAJOR

| | | |
|---|----------------------|------|
| 1 | Adagio | 4.13 |
| 2 | Allegro ma non tanto | 3.52 |
| 3 | Andante | 2.27 |
| 4 | Allegro moderato | 3.19 |

SONATA BWV 1028 IN D MAJOR

| | | |
|---|---------|------|
| 5 | Adagio | 2.06 |
| 6 | Allegro | 3.44 |
| 7 | Andante | 4.55 |
| 8 | Allegro | 4.19 |

SONATA BWV 1029 IN G MINOR

| | | |
|----|---------|------|
| 9 | Vivace | 5.21 |
| 10 | Adagio | 6.37 |
| 11 | Allegro | 3.51 |

Total time: 44.52