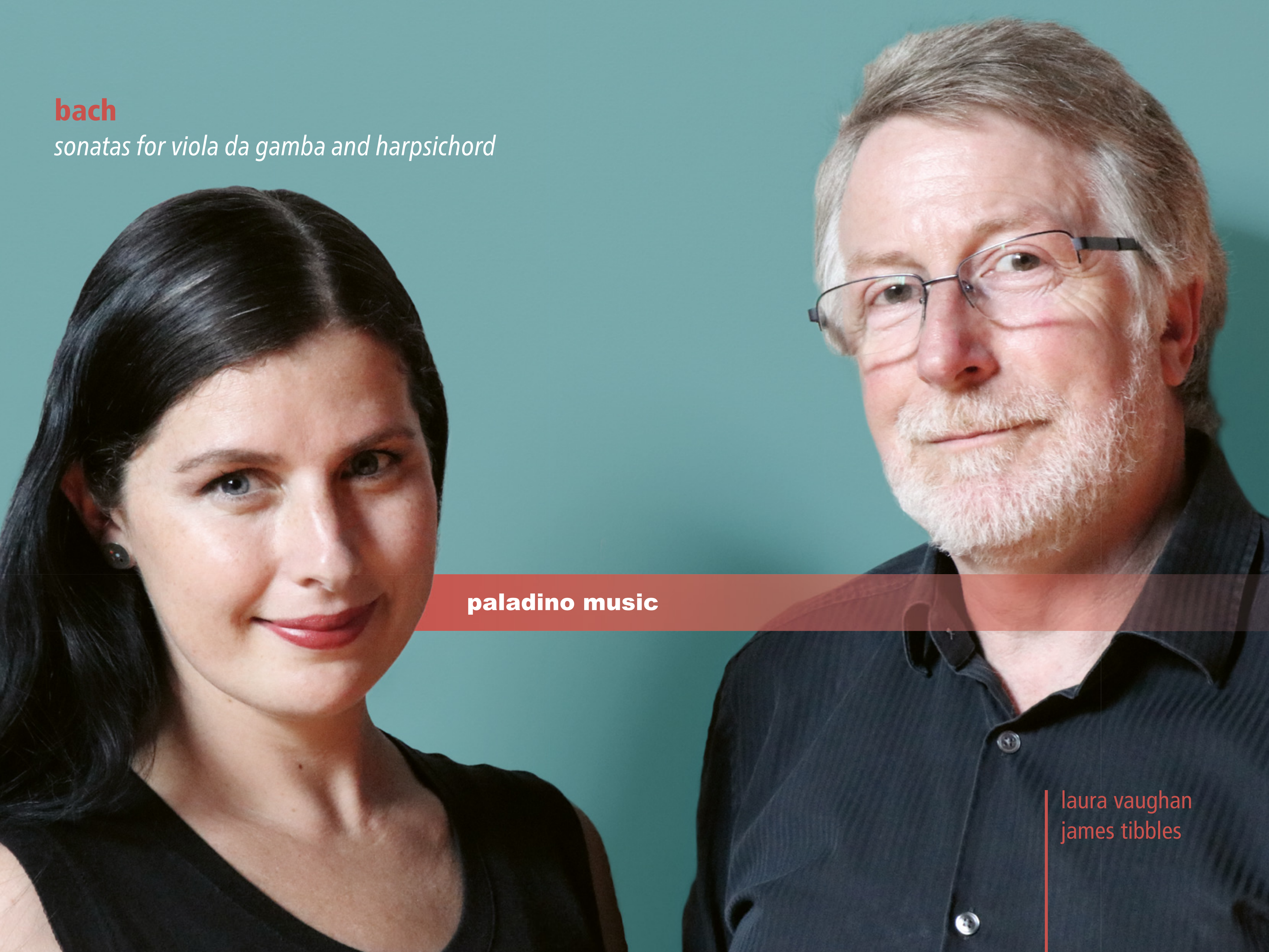

bach

sonatas for viola da gamba and harpsichord

paladino music

laura vaughan
james tibbles

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685 – 1750)

Adagio BWV 968, after violin sonata in C Major BWV 1005

01	Adagio	03:51

Sonata in G Major for viola da gamba and harpsichord BWV 1027

02	Adagio	03:51
03	Allegro ma non tanto	03:42
04	Andante	02:23
05	Allegro moderato	03:19

Sonata in D Major for viola da gamba and harpsichord BWV 1028

06	(Adagio)	02:07
07	(Allegro)	03:58
08	Andante	04:55
09	Allegro	04:15

Sonata in D Minor BWV 964, after violin sonata in A Minor BWV 1003

10	Adagio	03:04
11	Thema (Allegro)	07:44
12	Andante	04:42
13	Allegro	03:55

Sonata in G Minor for viola da gamba and harpsichord BWV 1029

14	Vivace	05:32
15	Adagio	06:18
16	Allegro	03:56

TT 67:40

Laura Vaughan, viola da gamba [2–9, 14 – 16]
James Tibbles, harpsichord

Johann Sebastian Bach's Sonatas for Viola da Gamba and Harpsichord

In the world of Early Music, each generation of performers aspires, I believe, to bring to audiences a new freshness that emanates from a combination of recent research, new approaches to old questions, and, that most enigmatic element, personal intuition. For some, there appears to be an assumption that previous generations of performers are in some way "old-fashioned" in their approach, and that we today are in a more privileged or enlightened state than were our forebears. Whilst it is true that new discoveries can provide us with greater insights into the past than was previously the case, the attitude that newer is better is problematic, particularly when applied to indeterminable questions such as what constitutes "good taste" (then and now).

For musicians working in the field of historically informed performance (the so-called "H.I.P." movement), there are some pitfalls that should be avoided; in the context of certain stylistic approaches becoming "flavour of the decade", we risk becoming allied to a newly-created national style of playing – one that is essentially an invention of the present. Whilst national styles were an intrinsic part of the world of the 18th century, where French, Italian and German styles (amongst others) were hotly debated and proudly upheld, as well as being an essential element in the compositional and performance context, this is a risky practice when it results in regional schools of playing in the 21st century – a time in which we perform music from many national styles (and, indeed, across a rather wide range of historical periods) to audiences of many and varied backgrounds.

Laura and my approach aims to create a performance that is "authentic" in the true sense of the word: being "true to itself", the performance must be about making the music come off the page, for the purpose of drawing a deep connection between the composer and the audience. Whilst that may sound as if we have the role of a mere medium between the two, in fact the performer's job is a privileged one, in which we aim to explore "the notes behind the page", seeking to find and communicate the essentially rhetorical nature of this music.

Today's listener has ready access to several fine recordings of Bach's gamba sonatas. There is therefore little point in producing yet another recording, "just for the sake of it". Similarly, the idea that one might wish to attempt to produce a "definitive" performance that might have some kind of archival merit seems more relevant to the domain of the museum than to the world of live music-making. Laura and I are very clear about this: our goal here is to capture a virtual concert in digital form, and in so doing be able to share our own musical journey with listeners who live far from our Southern Hemisphere geographical context.

This recording project had its genesis in a multi-year, pan-instrument exploration of the application and performance of articulation markings in the works of J. S. Bach. When translated into the performance medium, this research has resulted in an approach that emphasises the essential independence of the parts. In turn, this generates a freedom of interaction that, we hope, creates a more rhetorical and "free-spirited" performance, compared with one that, for example, is focused more on exactitude and absolute togetherness of ensemble – topics that have been inappropriately emphasised in the post WWII, "post-rhetorical" age of the second half of the 20th century.

In drawing together in one platform works for viola da gamba and harpsichord (at least one of which is a transcription), alongside transcriptions of solo violin pieces for keyboard, we have the opportunity to see the composer/arranger in action, as it were, creating works that transcend the boundaries of particular instrument types. In so doing, we are able to free ourselves from any assumption that an original version of a work is better *per se* than a transcription. In this sense, we are also able to liberate the performer from previously-held assumptions that there is always one "preferred" or "authentic" version of any given work.

The Gamba Sonatas

The three sonatas for viola da gamba and obbligato harpsichord date from Bach's Leipzig years (1723–1750). In addition to his sacred music compositions (notably the cantatas and Passions), Bach was active in composing and performing chamber music and works for clavier and organ. As director of Leipzig's Collegium Musicum from 1729–1737 and 1739–1741, he was responsible for providing music for the weekly performances and special events.

Bach's output for solo instrument and obbligato harpsichord comprises the three gamba sonatas, a set of six sonatas for violin, and just two for flute (ignoring two sonatas that are more likely to be works from the "Bach school", and not from the pen of Johann Sebastian himself). What we may find surprising is that the sonatas for "bass" instrument and harpsichord were not written for cello, but for the viola da gamba – an instrument that was at the time trending towards obsolescence. However, if we consider Bach's use of the gamba in the St Matthew and St John Passions, we see him employing the instrument in a highly selective manner, in arias that express the deepest of emotions, whilst requiring of the performer a virtuoso technique.

The three gamba sonatas may in fact all be transcriptions of works for other combinations. The G major sonata BWV 1027 is found in an earlier version for two flutes and continuo; moreover, it has been suggested that the two-flute sonata may itself not have been the original version of the work. This is the only one of the three gamba sonatas that has come down to us in the 21st century through Bach's autograph. What is particularly remarkable is that what we have been left with is an 18th century performing score of the gamba part, in which the composer appears to have placed articulation marks more carefully than is often the case; this in turn provides the musician with unusual confidence as to what the composer's intentions may have been. The same is not invariably true, however; the harpsichord part of the third movement of this sonata poses various problems, when one attempts to decode the exact position and duration of various of the slurs, some of which are close to unplayable.

Comparing the G major gamba sonata with the earlier two-flute setting, we find significant differences in how Bach applied the articulations. It appears that he treated the flutes as instruments that should in general have carefully matched articulations, whereas in the gamba and harpsichord version exactly the opposite is the case. Time and time again we encounter examples of parallel passages that are treated to differing articulations – both between the two instruments and in cases of repeated figures in the same instrument. This is not to suggest that the composer is being careless; rather, it is an indication of an approach in which Bach presents the various musical-rhetorical figures in a number of guises – empowering the performer to approach the performance of the figures in a carefree, "gestural" manner.

We are on much less stable ground with the remaining two sonatas, both of which have come down to us primarily through copies that date from 1753 – after the composer's death. Frustratingly, the autograph of the g minor sonata did survive into the 19th century, only to disappear some time after it had been referenced in the preparation of the Bach Gesellschaft edition of 1860.

Whereas the G major and D major sonatas were written in the standard four-movement sonata style (slow, fast, slow, fast), in the g minor sonata we encounter the in-vogue, three-movement *sonata in concerto style* (fast, slow, fast) – the Italian concerto form described by Scheibe in 1745. Interestingly, Bach's so-called *Concerto in the Italian style* and the triple concerto BWV 1044 (the latter being a fully-worked concerto, based on an earlier prelude and fugue for clavier) all date from the same period.

Although we are not able to determine for whom these sonatas were written, it is clear that Bach's gamba sonatas were not composed with the evolving middle class *Liebhaber* in mind; these sonatas are very far removed from the well-crafted but relatively unsophisticated works of Telemann and others. Given that the works date from his Leipzig years, one name springs to mind: it is conceivable that the young Carl Friederich Abel, who was studying in Leipzig at around the time these works are presumed to have been composed, and who was destined to become a famous gamba virtuoso, may have been the intended performer.

In these three sonatas Bach can be seen to be juggling the conflicting demands of formal contrapuntal writing, the essentially homophonic *galant* flamboyance, French ornamentation practices and Italian embellishment traditions. In Bach's hands these seemingly unlikely bedfellows are treated with mutual respect, and in the process are merged into compositions that, whilst reflecting past practices, are entirely fresh and modern.

The works for solo harpsichord

The harpsichord sonata BWV 964 is one of handful of solo harpsichord sonatas attributed to J. S. Bach, virtually all of which are arrangements of the works of others. As a transcription of a sonata for solo violin, the work was, however, not in fact conceived as a harpsichord piece. Furthermore, what is not clear is whether the transcription is Bach's own, or that of one of his circle – perhaps W. F. Bach. It seems significant that, given the central place of the solo sonata in the 18th century, Bach should almost entirely reject it in his writings for solo keyboard, whilst favouring forms such as suite, prelude & fugue and concerto.

Determining the authorship of a given work can be a highly problematical task, given the fact that autographs of many works haven't survived. We are frequently left to rely on copies (not necessarily contemporaneous with the composer). In the sonata BWV 964, we see in the first two movements highly sophisticated arrangements that are both technically complex and musically intense. In both cases the arranger substantially enriches the original violin writing. With the third movement, a mellifluous Andante that is somewhat reminiscent of the middle movement of the *Italian Concerto* BWV 971, we find a setting that is eminently suited to the harpsichord. The final movement, however, is surprisingly stark – the single violin line has been transcribed into a single harpsichord line, shared between the two hands. Although it is highly effective, it doesn't appear to reflect J. S. Bach's own practice in his many other keyboard transcriptions (notably the organ transcriptions of Italian violin concerti), where he rarely misses the opportunity to expand and enrich the harmonic and contrapuntal textures.

The transcription of the violin sonata BWV 1005 is, by way of contrast, a much looser transcription – entirely different from its original in texture and sonority. The transposition from the original in C to the harpsichord version in G results in a full-bodied bass resonance in the opening, while putting the violin melody into the tenor – almost as if it were intended for viola da gamba. As is so often the case, we are left with an incomplete manuscript; only the first movement of the transcription survives. Whether the person responsible for the transcription didn't complete the task, or whether it was the copyist, Altnikol, who failed in his duty, we are left with a remarkable work that is all too rarely performed. This is no doubt largely due to the fact that the movement ends in the dominant – making it impossible to programme as a stand-alone piece. In this recording (conceived as a “virtual” concert), the piece stands proudly as the opening “prelude”, leading naturally into the gamba sonata in the same key, almost as if that were the original intention of the composer.

James Tibbles, 2017

Laura Vaughan

Viola da gamba specialist Laura Vaughan is a dynamic and well-recognised member of Australia's early music scene. Coming to the viol from the unusual direction of the piano, Laura studied viol with Miriam Morris at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, after which she pursued further study at the Royal Conservatory, The Hague with Wieland Kuijken and Philippe Pierlot. Now based in Melbourne, she has established an active performing career encompassing a wide range of solo and chamber repertoire across Australasia. Passionate about the unique sound world of the viol, Laura is committed to bringing this exquisite repertoire to audiences around the world. She is also one of the few exponents of the rare lirone.

Laura teaches at Melbourne University and gives regular masterclasses and workshops for viol players around Australia. She has appeared in most major Australian festivals, including the Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane, Hobart Baroque and Brisbane Baroque Festivals, as well as numerous regional festivals, and she has performed for Musica Viva and Chamber Music New Zealand. Her performances can often be heard broadcast on ABC Classic FM as a soloist and chamber musician, and she appears on numerous CD recordings. Laura performs with ensembles including the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, Orchestra of the Antipodes, Adelaide Baroque, Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, Ironwood, Song Company, Accademia Arcadia, Consort Eclectus and is a founding member of the multiple ARIA award nominated trio Latitude 37.

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James Tibbles

James is one of New Zealand's leading players of historic keyboards (harpsichord, clavichord, fortepiano and organ). He has an active performing and recording career, both in New Zealand and internationally; he has performed in USA, Canada, UK, Holland, Germany, France, Slovenia, Spain and Australia. James is Coordinator of Early Music Studies in the School of Music, the University of Auckland, where he teaches early keyboard and organ, and lectures in Historic Performance Practice. Beyond his University role, in which he is also Deputy Head of School, James is Artistic Director of Age of Discovery and Organist and Director of Music at St Patrick's Cathedral, Auckland.

After completing his MMus in Organ and Harpsichord at the University of Auckland, James undertook postgraduate study at the Royal Conservatory, The Hague with Professor Bob van Asperen, as well as pursuing studies on organ and fortepiano. As continuo harpsichordist, he was part of a prize-winning ensemble at the 1984 Musica Antiqua Bruges competition.

James has a substantial discography, appearing on Atoll, paladino music, Musicaphon and Naxos labels. Highlights include *And I saw a New Heaven*, *Sesquialtera*, J. S. Bach *In the Italian Style*, North

German Organ Music, and François Couperin Organ Masses, recorded on the 1680 instrument in Rozay-en-Brie, France. His most recent recording is of Dittersdorf's Ovid Symphonies, transcribed by the composer for fortepiano, 4-hands.

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sonata in g major for viola da gamba and harpsichord bwv 1027

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sonata in d major for viola da gamba and harpsichord bwv 1028

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07	(allegro)	03:58
08	andante	04:55
09	allegro	04:15

sonata in d minor bwv 964, after violin sonata in a minor bwv 1003

10	adagio	03:04
11	thema (allegro)	07:44
12	andante	04:42
13	allegro	03:55

sonata in g minor for viola da gamba and harpsichord bwv 1029

14	vivace	05:32
15	adagio	06:18
16	allegro	03:56

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