



JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH



Sonatas for viola da gamba, BWV 1027-1029

Sergei Istomin viola da gamba (Stainer, 1655)

Viviana Sofronitsky fortepiano (Silbermann, 1749)

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(Silbermann, 1749, copy by Paul McNulty)

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)

Sonata No. 1 in G Major, BWV 1027

[1] Adagio	3:27
[2] Allegro ma non tanto	3:58
[3] Andante	2:25
[4] Allegro moderato	3:21

Sonata No. 2 in D Major, BWV 1028

[5] Adagio	1:54
[6] Allegro	3:59
[7] Andante	4:27
[8] Allegro	4:34

Sonata No. 3 in G Minor, BWV 1029

[9] Vivace	5:44
[10] Adagio	5:06
[11] Allegro	4:07

Ricercar a 3 in C Minor from "Musikalisches Opfer", BWV 1079

[12] Ricercar	7:54
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Total time 50:58

Any attempt at dating J.S. Bach's three sonatas for viola da gamba and obligato harpsichord (BWV 1027 – 1029) is a very complex issue. Only the G major sonata ('Sonata a Cembalo e Viola da Gamba,' BWV 1027) is available to us in Bach's handwriting and can be dated, according to the watermark found in the paper, to Bach's late Leipzig period (1735 to circa 1744 – 46). The two other sonatas, in D major and G minor (both titled 'Sonata a Viola da Gamba e Cembalo obligato,' BWV 1028 and 1029) survive only as manuscript copies by other people, of which the earliest were made in 1753 by the sixteen-year-old Christian Friedrich Penzel (1737 – 1801) while he was a pupil at the St. Thomas School in Leipzig. Penzel copied the D major sonata in score and the G minor one in parts. All three of these manuscripts are preserved at the Berlin State Library (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin), as Mus.ms. Bach P 226, P 1057, and St 163, respectively. There we can also find an anonymous manuscript score of the D major sonata in an arrangement for harpsichord and violin: 'Sonata (sic.) pour le Clavecin e (sic.) Violon de J.S. Bach,' as Mus.ms. Bach P 532. The writer of this source is a copyist, identified by name as 'Krüger.'

It is interesting to note that the manuscript of the G minor sonata (BWV 1029) in Bach's handwriting was still available in 1860 to Wilhelm Rust (1822 – 1892), the editor of the Bach-Gesellschaft edition, but since then it has disappeared without a trace, presumably during or after the Second World War. A second 18th-century copy of this sonata in parts by Johann Nikolaus Forkel (1749–1818), in addition to Penzel's, is preserved in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (MS 1564) under the title 'Sonata a Cembalo obligato e Viola da Gamba da

Giov: Sebast: Bach.' Forkel was a German musicologist and music theorist who was a great admirer of J. S. Bach. He wrote the first Bach biography.

According to the most recent research, Bach's gamba sonatas are now dated 1736 – 41, and therefore could have been written for Carl Friedrich Abel (1723–1787), the son of Christian Ferdinand Abel (1683–1737), who was Bach's friend and colleague at the court of Köthen. Carl Friedrich's presence in Leipzig is documented when he played in a concert organised by the newly founded 'Grosses Concert' society on 13 October 1743. Subsequently he moved to Dresden to work for the court Kapellmeister Johann Adolph Hasse. Carl Friedrich may have also been the player for whom Bach composed the virtuoso accompaniment for the performance of the St. Matthew Passion in the early 1740s.

Bibliography and further reading:

Perl, Hille. *'Preface,' Johann Sebastian Bach, Drei Sonaten für Viola da Gamba und obligates Cembalo BWV 1027–1029, Faksimile, herausgegeben von Hille Perl, Magdeburg: Edition Walhall (EW 888), 2014.*

Dreyfus, Laurence. *'Concluding remarks,' Johann Sebastian Bach, Drei Sonaten für Viola da Gamba und Cembalo BWV 1027 – 1029, Nach den Quellen herausgegeben von Laurence Dreyfus, Leipzig: Edition Peters (Nr. 9853), 1985.*

Robinson, Lucy. *Notes on editing the Bach gamba sonatas (BWV 1027 – 1029), Chelys (now 'The Viola da Gamba Society (UK) Journal'), Vol.14, 1985, pp. 25 -39.*

Holman, Peter *'Life after death: The Viola da Gamba in Britain from Purcell to Dolmetsch,' Woodbridge: the Boydell Press, 2013.*

For this recording the sonatas are played on a viol of **Jacob Stainer** (1619–1683), who was one of the most prominent instrument makers of his time in Europe. The genuine printed label inside the viol indicates that it was made in 1655 in Absam (Austria), the small town near Innsbruck where Stainer was born, worked, and died.

At the present time we know of 17 bass viols by Stainer. Not all of them are dated, but of those that are, this one and the one owned by the Dolmetsch family (UK) are the earliest, both made in the same year. In fact, according to the luthier Benjamin Schröder, none of the viols without a label is any earlier than these two. He also has concluded that in the early part of his career Stainer made his viols with "C"-shaped holes, and only switched to "f"-shaped holes after about 1660. Stainer's instruments are known for their brilliant and resonant sound.

Sergei Istomin



Sergei Istomin is a cellist and a viola da gamba player. He began his violoncello studies at the age of six at the Gnessin State Musical College in Moscow, where he obtained his bachelor's degree. He completed his master's degree at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory. Later he undertook post-graduate studies with Catharina Meints Caldwell at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music (Oberlin, Ohio, USA) and August Wenzinger at the Oberlin Baroque Performance Institute.

In 2018 he received his 'Doctor of Arts: Music' degree at the University of Ghent, Belgium. The title of his doctoral thesis is "Variations on a Rococo theme, Op. 33: Pyotr Tchaikovsky and Karl Friedrich Wilhelm Fitzenhagen: a creative collaboration. Moscow and Saint Petersburg violoncello schools in the light of European traditions: a historical and textological clarification."

Sergei Istomin has performed solo and chamber music recitals in many European and North American Festivals. His repertoire includes baroque, classical, romantic, and contemporary music on both period and modern instruments. He has recorded for Sony Classical; Analekta, CBC (Canada); Centaur Records, Music and Arts Programs of America (USA); Passacaille Records (Belgium); and Zig-Zag Territoires (France).

Today Sergei Istomin lives in Belgium from where he continues his international career.

Viviana Sofronitsky has followed in the footsteps of her father Vladimir Sofronitsky, a distinguished Russian pianist. She earned a DMA from the Moscow Conservatory and received historical fortepiano and harpsichord performance degrees from the Royal Conservatory in Den Haag.

She won prizes at the “Bach Tage Berlin” and “Musica Antiqua” competitions. Viviana Sofronitsky has recorded with “AVI”, “ETCetera”, “Centaur”, “Suoni e colori”, “Globe”, “Pro Musica Camerata” (11 CD of complete Mozart concertos) and “Passacaille” labels. Her current projects include recording Chopin and Liszt on romantic fortepiano. Russian-Canadian citizen Viviana Sofronitsky is based in Prague from which she travels with her fortepianos.





Fortepiano after G. Silbermann, ca.1749

FF - e3, damper hand stop, una corda, Pantalon register stop, walnut

Gottfried Silbermann (1683 –1753) built organs, clavichords, harpsichords and fortepianos. His father was a carpenter in Kleinbobritsch who later moved to Frauenstein, where, as it was common at this time, Gottfried learned the family trade. He studied organ making in Strasburg from 1702 until his return to Saxony, where in 1711 he established his own organ workshop in Freiberg. In 1723, when Silbermann finished his “Grand Organ” in Freiberg Cathedral, Frederick I gave him the title of “*Königlich Polnischen und Churfürstlich Sächsischen Hof- und Landorgelmachers.*” During his life Silbermann built more than 50 organs, including the great organ in Hofkirche Dresden.

Gottfried Silbermann is famous for building the first German fortepiano in 1732, which he did following a description by Scipio Maffei of Cristofori “*gravicembalo col piano e forte.*” Frederick the Great purchased several of Silbermann’s fortepianos, which he used for his own performances on flute, accompanied by CPE Bach at the keyboard. When J.S. Bach visited his son in Potsdam in the 1730’s, he criticized the Silbermann piano, saying that the treble was weak, and the keys hard to play. At Bach’s second 1747 encounter at Sans Souci, the Silbermann piano met with his approval.

Paul McNulty’s copy of Gottfried Silbermann’s 1749 instrument, from the Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nuremberg, represents the final stage of Silbermann’s development of the Cristofori design.

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Liner notes: Sergei Istomin

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