

VIOLIN CONCERTO IN E MAJOR

BWV1042

- J.S. BACH -

'In his youth and until the approach of old age, he played the violin cleanly and penetratingly' - so C.P.E. Bach described his father. Revered in the modern age for his organ and keyboard works, choral masterpieces and the six *Brandenburg Concerti*, Bach took his first professional appointment as a violinist in the Ducal Orchestra of Weimar. Throughout his career he was recognized as a talented and virtuosic string player - indeed the famously challenging viola parts in the *Brandenburgs* (particular No.3) were initially for his own entertainment.

After Bach moved to Cöthen in 1717 and was no longer tied to preparing music for weekly church services, he had the time to write many of what would become his best-known works. During his six years in Cöthen, he composed the six *Brandenburg Concerti*, the six suites for solo cello, much of the keyboard music we still play (the first book of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, the two-part inventions and three-part sinfonias, the *English* and *French* suites), miscellaneous sonatas and partitas, and more than a dozen concertos. What would be a lifetime's achievement for any composer was merely a fraction of Bach's output.

Remaining available to us are manuscript copies of Bach's score, each written after the composer's death - the most clear of which is that of a Berlin-based musician, Hering, a student of CPE Bach, which dates from around 1760. This student, supplied with scores by Johann's son, seems to have transcribed a huge amount of his repertoire with great levels of accuracy.

The violin concerto in E major is the second of the two surviving works for solo violin, in addition to which there exists the 'double' concerto for two violins. The E major re-appears as the Harpsichord Concerto in D major BWV1054 written between 1738 and 1740 - a source from which the present edition (compiled by Georg von Dadelsen for Bärenreiter) has drawn inference and comparison where sections in the violin score are missing.

The E major violin concerto has three movements in the traditional fast-slow-fast pattern. The first and last both adhere to the ritornello scheme, in which an assertive musical idea for the entire ensemble returns like a refrain, separated by episodes which allow the soloist to shine in phrase after phrase of florid, exuberant music. Both movements are particularly spirited and joyful, propelled along by a seemingly irrepressible rhythmic drive. The contrasting central Adagio, in C-sharp minor, is one of Bach's grand, majestically paced, introspective arias.

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