



### **No music but Bach's brings...**

No music but Bach's brings so many changes and revelations to the mind of a musician throughout his life. It contains lessons of harmony, rhythm and architecture, and each time they arise, they seem to hold a secret meaning that renders all others obsolete. Their intensity is without doubt a measure of the richness of an oeuvre that is impossible to grasp in its all its dimensions.

Speaking as a performer, over the last twenty years these lessons have marked the stages of my own learning. I could sum up my own path very simply: first, a fascination with the magic of harmony and the expressive wealth to which it gives rise, then an awareness of the need for tonal humility, perhaps more in keeping with conceptions of the human at the period when Bach wrote, but ultimately in support of the same emotional ferment.

In that respect I would like to emphasise something that is only apparent when thinking about the complete span of Bach's sonatas and partitas—the way emotion is steered by their order and sequence. Although the key signatures of each one doesn't seem to have been designed as part of a series, I am fascinated by the idea that the first four offer an ever more intense exploration of human passions and sufferings—"futile" passions inspired by the French baroque in partita 1, harsh and angry pain in the Fugue in G minor, reaching an apogee in the chaconne where even the major, "divine" element is in the end swept up in a great wave of nostalgia and resignation.

At that point, in my mind, there is a break. The very first notes of the third sonata in C major bring a breath of a different and harsher kind, at first coldly optimistic and indifferent (adagio), then going a step higher at the start of the fugue, which reminds me of the second movement of Beethoven's Opus 111: in the same key of C major, the two works share an impatient, irrepressible and imminent joyousness as well as the sense of absolute certainty, which, in the Bach, is formally underpinned by a reprise without variation of the entire exposition save for an obstinate, demented G leaping out of the final chord as if to say that the the fugue will go ever on even after it has come to an end. Then comes the third partita in E major, bringing a mood of

sheer joy made from simplicity and lightness, crowned at the end by a playful, witty gigue. It seems to me that we are wonderfully fortunate to be able to have such easy access to the minds of men capable of reaching such complete perfection in music that passes to us feelings that are maybe coincidental but also inexhaustible.

I've expressed myself on purpose in ways that may sound excessive or grandiloquent, and that are in any case not at all representative of the tone that I have chosen to adopt in performing these pieces. But whatever register is used to talk about this music it is I think important to express the magic that imbues these works. Though they have been performed in different ways over the ages, they have always fascinated and inspired performers and listeners with equal intensity.

But we will perhaps always remain completely open to Bach's music. That is certainly another one of the opportunities it affords us.

***Tedi Papavrami***