José Serebrier and Leopold Stokowski look over one of Serebrier’s compositions for the opening concert of the American Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall, October 1963.
Leopold STOKOWSKI

Symphonic Transcriptions

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750):
1. Toccata and Fugue in D minor (for Organ, BWV 565) 9:02
2. Aria (Largo from the Concerto for Harpsichord and Strings in F minor, BWV 1056) 6:00
3. Wachet auf (Sleepers, Awake!) (Schübler Chorale Prelude for Organ, BWV 645) 3:48
4. Ich ruf’ zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ (Chorale Prelude for Organ, BWV 639) 5:24
5. Adagio (from the Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in C major for Organ, BWV 564) 4:01
6. Mein Jesu (from Schenelli’s Musical Song Book) 3:51
7. Ein feste burg (A Mighty Fortress) (Chorale after Luther) 2:46
8. Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring (Chorale No. 10 from Cantata No.147) 3:33
9. Prelude in B minor (Prelude No. 24 from Book 1 of The Well-Tempered Clavier) 3:54
10. Siciliano (from Sonata No. 4 in C minor for Violin and Clavier, BWV 1017) 2:41

Giovanni Palestrina (1526-1594):
11. Adoramus te (Motet for Four Voices) 2:33

William Byrd (1543-1623):
12. Pavane and Gigue (Pavane ‘The Earl of Salisbury’ from Parthenia and ‘A Gigg’ from The Fitzwilliam Virginal Book) 4:35

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(formerly attrib. Purcell as ‘The Trumpet Voluntary’)

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17. Fugue in C minor (Fugue No. 2 from Book 1 of The Well-Tempered Clavier) 2:04

Publishers: Breude Bros. (tracks 1 and 11); Edwin Kalms & Co., Inc. (tracks 5-7, 9, 10).

Use of unpublished Stokowski transcriptions (tracks 2-4, 8, 12-17) provided courtesy of the Stokowski Collection, University of Pennsylvania, and the Theodore Presser Company.

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Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

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Leopold Stokowski (1882-1977)

It was as a young choirboy at the St. Marylebone Parish Church that Leopold Stokowski first played the organ and began to develop his love of Bach’s music. In January 1896, at the age of 13, he entered the Royal College of Music, where he studied alongside Ralph Vaughan Williams. In 1902 he became organist and choirmaster at St James’s, Piccadilly, and three years later took up a similar position at St Bartholomew’s in New York. There he gave spectacular organ recitals while all the time having his eye on becoming an orchestral conductor. He achieved his ambition in 1909 when he was appointed conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. Three years later he took charge of the Philadelphian Orchestra and transformed it into one of the world’s greatest. He championed a great deal of new music and gave innumerable American premieres of twentieth-century masterworks, such as Mahler’s Eighth Symphony, Schoenberg’s Gurrelieder and Stravinsky’s Rite of Spring.

Stokowski began, however, to miss the music of Bach that he had studied during his youth. He doubtless recalled that the organ stops of the instruments he played, both in London and New York, were designated with the names of orchestral instruments. The St Bartholomew’s organ, for example, had its stops marked “violin”, “horn”, “flute”, “trumpet”, and so on, as indeed in their different ways were the organ stops of Bach’s own time. Clearly the organ was a kind of precursor of the modern orchestra so what could be more logical than to transcribe Bach’s organ music for symphonic forces? In the 1920s Stokowski began work on his Bach arrangements, introducing them both in concert and on records, and scoring a brilliant success. He brought music out of the organ loft which, for the audiences of those days, was still quite unfamiliar. Although Stokowski was not the first to make Bach orchestrations he was certainly the most prolific.

For his first Naxos volume of Bach Transcriptions, José Serebrier chose as the closing item the mighty Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor. This was Stokowski’s first great organ transcription, given its première in 1922. Now, as an overture to the present selection – and in response to popular and critical demand – we hear the most famous Bach arrangement of all, the Toccata and Fugue in D minor, dating from 1926. Its first recording the following year was hailed by The Gramophone as “a most exciting achievement” and it reached a wide cinema-going public when it was chosen as the opening item in Walt Disney’s Fantasia. Even today it has not lost its power to thrill and as Bernard Herrmann once wrote: “We admit that Bach never heard the Toccata and Fugue in D minor in the way that Stokowski has realised it but Bach must have had that kind of sound in his mind. He certainly did not have the sound of some baroque church organ with a couple of tired little boys trying to pump air in at the back – but rather he must have imagined a great cosmic sound and Stokowski’s transcription is a metamorphosis of that sound.

Stokowski did not confine himself to organ music when he made his Bach arrangements but covered a wide spectrum which took in cantatas, songs, harpsichord pieces, violin sonatas, and so on. Bach himself often arranged his own music in different ways when he made his Bach arrangements but covered a wide spectrum which took in cantatas, songs, harpsichord pieces, violin sonatas, and so on. Bach himself often arranged his own music in different ways and the resplendent Aria we hear next occurs both as the Largo in his Concerto for Harpsichord and Strings in F minor and as the opening Sinfonía to his Cantata No. 136. This is followed by another piece that occurs more than once in Bach’s catalogue: it is an aria for tenor in the Cantata No. 140 Wachet auf and also an organ Chorale Prelude with the same title. Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ is one of Bach’s most beautiful creations, here realised with utmost simplicity for woodwinds and strings. The Adagio from the Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in C major which follows uses a larger orchestra but equally sparingly.

Stokowski did not always use enormous forces when arranging Bach and in Mein Jesus we hear one of
his transcriptions for strings, a heartfelt realisation of a song from Schemelli’s Musical Song Book. This is followed by a stirring version of the old Lutheran chorale *Ein feste burg* which had its origins in Gregorian chant and again was used by Bach in several of his works. One of his most famous pieces is the ever-popular *Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring* from the Cantata No. 147 and this is followed by two more string orchestra arrangements: the haunting Prelude in B minor from Book 1 of The Well-Tempered Clavier and the lilting Siciliano from the Sonata No. 4 for Violin and Clavier.

Next comes a sequence of six numbers arranged by Stokowski from music of both the pre- and post-baroque periods as well as from Bach’s own time. Palestrina’s solemn *Adoramus te* was originally a Motet for Four Voices, while the Pavane and Gigue of William Byrd, the “Father of Musick” in sixteenth-century England, provided Stokowski with two contrasting clavichord pieces which he clothed in sumptuous colours. The piece once famous as “Purcell’s Trumpet Voluntary” comes next, though nowadays it is known to be Jeremiah Clarke’s *Prince of Denmark’s March*. Stokowski changed the title to *Trumpet Prelude* and in his orchestral treatment displayed just a touch of humour.

Boccherini’s *Minuet* will be instantly recognised by movie buffs as the music which Alec Guinness and his gang of comic criminals pretended to play while planning a bank robbery in Ealing Films’ *The Ladykillers*. In a completely different mood comes music by Johann Mattheson, an exact contemporary of Bach though a less well-known composer. His majestic and sonorous Air from the Suite No. 5 for harpsichord is sublimity itself. More music of a delightful character is the Andante cantabile from Haydn’s String Quintet in F major. Stokowski first recorded this in 1929 as 18th Century Dance but it was also once popularly known as Haydn’s Serenade.

Finally we return to J.S. Bach and a brief Fugue in C minor from Book 1 of The Well-Tempered Clavier. Stokowski works this little harpsichord piece into music of almost Wagnerian proportions which, with their rousing sounds from winds, strings and brass, bring this colourful selection of celebrated transcriptions to a mighty and stirring close.

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Conducted by José Serebrier:

- **STOKOWSKI**
  - **BACH TRANSCRIPTIONS**
  - Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra
  - Conducted by José Serebrier
  - SKU: 8.557883

- **MUSSORGSKY**
  - **STOKOWSKI**
  - Pictures at an Exhibition
  - Bernadis Gudunov • Night on Bare Mountain
  - Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra
  - Conducted by José Serebrier
  - SKU: 8.557645

- **WAGNER**
  - **STOKOWSKI**
  - Symphonic Syntheses
  - Tristan and Isolde • Parsifal • The Ring
  - Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra
  - Conducted by José Serebrier
  - SKU: 8.570293

- **AMERICAN CLASSICS**
  - **JOSÉ SEREBRIER**
  - Symphony No. 3
  - Passacaglia and Perpetual Mobile • Elegy for Strings
  - Variations on a Theme from Childhood • Fantasia
  - Woodrow National Chamber Orchestra • José Serebrier
  - SKU: 8.559183
Leopold Stokowski arranged nearly 40 works from Bach’s catalogue for the modern symphony orchestra, and José Serebrier’s second volume of Bach-Stokowski Transcriptions is as colourful and wide-ranging as the first (8.557883). In response to popular and critical demand the present selection begins with the most famous Bach orchestration of all, the celebrated Toccata and Fugue in D minor. This reached its widest public in Walt Disney’s Fantasia and here introduces a programme of sumptuous arrangements, including other music from the pre- and post-baroque periods.

— The Leopold Stokowski Society

Symphonic Transcriptions

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Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra • José Serebrier

This recording was made possible through generous grants from the Leopold Stokowski Society, the BSO Endowment Trust and James and Becky Daley. With acknowledgements to the Stokowski Collection, University of Pennsylvania Library. A full track list can be found on page 2 of the booklet.

Recorded in the Concert Hall, Lighthouse, Poole, UK, on 17th and 18th April, 2008
Producer, engineer and editor: Phil Rowlands • Booklet Notes: Edward Johnson
Cover image by Paolo Zeccara

Leopold STOKOWSKI (1882-1977)

NAXOS

STOKOWSKI: Bach Transcriptions • 2

8.572050

Playing Time
64:59

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2. Arioso
   6:00
3. Wachet auf (Sleepers, Awake!)
   3:48
4. Ich ruf’ zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ
   3:24
5. Adagio
   4:01
6. Mein Jesu
   3:51
7. Ein feste burg (A Mighty Fortress)
   2:46
8. Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring
   3:33
9. Prelude in B minor
   3:54
10. Siciliano
    2:41

Giovanni Palestrina (1526-1594):
11. Adoramus te
    2:33

William Byrd (1543-1623):
12. Pavane and Gigue
    4:35

Jeremiah Clarke (1674-1707):
13. Trumpet Prelude
    2:23

Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805):
14. Minuet
    3:43

Johann Mattheson (1681-1764):
15. Air
    3:48

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809):
16. Andante cantabile
    2:52

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750):
17. Fugue in C minor
    2:04

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra • José Serebrier

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