



BACH

UNCAGED

MINA GAJIĆ

ZACHARY CARRETTIN

BACH UNCAGED

1.	Sonata for Solo Violin No. 1 in G Minor, BWV 1001 <i>Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)</i>	
	Adagio	6:16
2 – 3.	Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano <i>John Cage (1912–1992)</i>	
	Sonata III	2:28
	Sonata IV	2:00
4.	Sonata for Solo Violin No. 1 in G Minor, BWV 1001 <i>J.S.Bach</i>	
	Fuga	12:07
5 – 7.	Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano <i>John Cage</i>	
	Interlude I	3:42
	Sonata V	1:57
	Sonata VI	2:19
8.	Sonata for Solo Violin No. 1 in G Minor, BWV 1001 <i>J.S.Bach</i>	
	Siciliana	5:10
9 – 10.	Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano <i>John Cage</i>	
	Sonata XIV	2:47
	Sonata XV	2:46
11.	Sonata for Solo Violin No. 1 in G Minor, BWV 1001 <i>J.S.Bach</i>	
	Presto	4:12
12.	Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano <i>John Cage</i>	
	Sonata XVI	4:34

Total Time: 50:26

This recording is a reflection of several performances that took place over time and in varying acoustic environments, including collaborations with contemporary and aerial/vertical dance. The Cage works tend to be binary in form, and while meditatively free flowing in spirit, the architecture is clean and easily understood. The Bach works—four movements that make up a sonata—offer a multitude of interpretive options, including an approach that wanders through the harmonic labyrinth without regard to pulse and traditional notions of time, magnifying minute rhetorical statements along the way. It can be such that the Bach works represent the dreamscape while the atonal prepared piano pieces of Cage represent structure. This might be in opposition to many listeners’ expectations. Performance traditions of Bach, combined with the underlying dance rhythms and characters that pervade his instrumental writing, steer many musicians in the direction of the rational: consistent tempo, consistent articulation in each motif’s repetition, concise determination of tempo and character as related to the movement’s marking, such as “allegro.” Bach’s exquisite contrapuntal writing and harmonic nuance contribute to the idea of intellectualism as an oft utilized guide for musical interpre-

tation—when deciding about phrasing, articulation, and the sense of time. Conversely, Cage’s exploration of non-Western music idioms played on western instruments seems a natural departure from the European ideas of form and content. Thankfully, written music has much room for the implementation of ever-changing ideas in time, ideas that change over time, and even though a recording seems to be a permanent medium, recordings can be approached as a performance: a rendition of a work or an entire concert program is a reflection of ideas that are offered to the audience here and now. In this recorded rendition, Cage offers the morning coffee following each Bachian dream.

- (Carrettin/Gajić)

Bach

As regards phrasing in Bach, time and place have influenced my work in distinct and ever-changing ways. From period instrument performances in European churches to electric violin collaborations with dance, I’m enchanted by the inherent flexibility in Bach’s content, his message within the music. There seems to be no finality to the meanings within his solo instrumental works, the teachings, if you will. I intend to share distinct explorations via varied recordings of Bach’s music over the course of many years. In 2020, I recorded

three cello suites on baroque viola (“Metamorphosis”), and a couple years later, Mina and I recorded concertos with our colleagues at Boulder Bach Festival; both albums were recorded by Sono Luminus. This third effort, (“Bach UnCaged”), features electric violin played at low pitch with a baroque bow, utilizing occasional “delay” effect pedal to accentuate elision and cadenza within Bach’s autograph manuscript, as observed in harmonic stasis points and in the artfulness of the script itself.

The first movement, *Adagio*, serves as a prelude to the entire *sonata da chiesa*, which is a sacred instrumental work, without text. The prelude as a form implies a personal time to warm up within the key or mode, to adjust frets (for example, on a viola da gamba), an intimate moment when gigging musicians would prepare their instruments and hands for the evening’s dance music, or in the case of church music, when the organist would prepare the congregation to enter the reflective state of mind.

The fugue is next in the sonata, representing the “majesty and complexity of the heavens.” Bach’s six works for solo violin include three church sonatas—each featuring a fugue, and three dance suites (partitas), each without a fugue. His tempo or character indication at the start of this movement is *allegro*, and while traditionally interpreted as quick and lively,

perhaps one can interpret ‘allegro’ as an indication that a pulse or tempo has arrived or is arriving, (following the very free prelude that preceded this movement).

The *siciliano* is a dance character whose tempo can be lively or reflective, depending on the context and composer. In the church sonata form, the third movement is typically on the slower side; for example, in Bach’s Sonata in A Minor for solo violin the third movement is an *andante*, a walking tempo or feeling. In his Sonata in C Major the third movement is marked *largo*. I always find that Bach carries us from song to dance to elision (or cadenza), and that the possible pivot moments between these offer some choices/decisions on the part of the interpreter. The elisions offer moments of repose, typically harmonically static, gently returning to the dance with rhythm and harmonic progression.

This sonata ends with a *presto*, a toccata if you will, which traditionally is played as a virtuosic bravura finale. I find Bach, even in the most rapid succession of notes, to be always deeply connected to motivic relationships, rhetorical dialogue, interwoven intervallic complexities, all of which, guided by exquisite harmonic progressions, can be glossed over and missed entirely by the listener in a fast and thrilling performance. I decided, for this particular rendition, to permit the notes to spread as watercolor on paper, or as

looking into a microscope. There are a multitude of options as regards where to insert a comma or how to shape the line dynamically. The array of possible sentence structures (phrasing options) is miraculous, and yet, regardless of one’s chosen tempo and phrasing, the inherent meaning of the music always speaks, sometimes as poetry and other times as prose, depending on the performer’s decisions.

As regards ornamentation—the addition or subtraction of notes, resulting in a musical commentary on the musical material itself—for this recorded performance I chose to approach the manuscript as a chart, a map to navigate, with an arrival point, a destination, and with the inclusion of moments on the journey that aren’t specifically notated.

- (Carrettin)

Cage

Cage’s piano preparations consist of various objects such as nuts and bolts wedged between the piano strings. The resulting sounds are similar to the Indonesian gamelan ensemble of percussion instruments. When the preparations are done carefully and with attention to detail, the result is a palette of resonance that is distinct, overtones that intrigue. Our idea of pairing this with the electric “baroque”

violin in live performance and recording has been to find a shared space in sound, a space that breathes, allowing for improvised timings and phrasing that is sensitive to the dancers and to the acoustic environment. Bach's music is closely associated with dance, but in fact on this recording, the Cage works are perhaps more intrinsically dance-like. Their simplicity, playfulness and buoyant pulse are juxtaposed with the rich, nuanced developments of harmony in Bach's solo sonata for violin.

Both composers practiced active spiritual lives, guided by texts, artworks, and individuals, from Zen masters to Lutheran philosophers. Both composers worked with clear approaches to form, and with Cage that included working extensively in visual art, writing, with dance choreography, and with his own designs of complex garden systems. Both composers were improvising musicians who practiced this art in their professional capacities, from Bach improvising fugues on the organ to Cage accompanying dance classes and performances on the piano, and the prepared piano.

"Intentionally expressive compositions" is how Cage described his Sonatas and Interludes. Inspired by Ananda Coomaraswamy's "The Transformation of Nature in Art: The Dance of Shiva," Cage's Sonatas and Interludes depict the nine "rasas," spiritual and emotional states: heroic, erotic,

wonder, rejoicing, anxiety, fear, anger, loathing, and the resolution of tranquility.

Cage realized over time that piano preparations on different pianos cannot produce the same sounds, and that there would be some indeterminacy in performances of these works. This understanding was consistent with his interest in Zen philosophy and his later view that life isn't meant for repetitive actions and experiences, rather, unexpected events or occurrences are intended to be enjoyed as they happen.

Most of the sonatas are in binary form while the interludes aren't. Interestingly, in Bach's solo violin partitas every movement is binary (except for the famous *Ciaccona*), but in the sonatas this isn't the case. In the Sonata in G Minor featured on this recording, only the final movement *presto* is in binary form. In Cage's works for prepared piano, resonance, sound/timbre, patterns, melodies/fragments, and lack of cadence culminate in a meditative experience for the listener and the pianist. I also hear Cage's playful joy and youthful enthusiasm, the delight and wonder he shared with others throughout his life. These works are expressive, emotional, and at the same time feature a one-pointed focus, like the candle's flame in a visualization practice.

- (Gajić)



Mina Gajić has garnered an international reputation for insightful and dynamic performances of a vast and ever-evolving repertoire including many new works by living composers, concertos and recitals performed on historic Romantic Era pianos, and collaborations on harpsichord and fortepiano. She started her education and music career in Yugoslavia and subsequently performed as concerto soloist and recitalist in Italy, France, the Czech Republic, Serbia, Montenegro, China, Bolivia, and across the United States. As duo partner with violinist Zachary Carrettin, she has appeared on four continents, focusing on a diverse repertoire spanning the centuries and various styles—on historic period pianos in addition to modern concert instruments, and including new works composed for the duo.

Notable performances have included critically-acclaimed period instrument renditions of works by Chopin, Brahms, Britten, Ives, Berg, Antheil, and Bartók. Her doctoral dissertation and subsequent research on the work of Yugoslav composer Josip Slavenski connect Balkan folkloric traditions and approaches to twentieth century music between the two World Wars.

Her performances of Brahms and Schumann (Érard piano, 1895) can be heard on the audio book *Escapement*, by award-winning author Kristen Wolf. Additionally, Gajić and Carrettin’s recording of Schubert sonatas on historical instruments (Érard piano, 1835), *Boundless*, was released in 2020 and became a Top 10 on Billboard Charts “Traditional Classical” the following month. Her recording of Balkan Dances & Tango Nuevo, *Confluence* was released in 2022 on the Sono Luminus label. She performs as harpsichord concerto soloist on the 2023 *Boulder Bach Festival* album, also on Sono Luminus, and her album titled *Sonic Alchemy* was released in 2023.

Gajić holds degrees from the Academy of Fine Arts in Belgrade, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Shepherd School of Music at Rice University, and holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Colorado-Boulder.

Gajić is the founder and Artistic Director of Boulder International Chamber Music Competition—*Art of Duo*. Former faculty at Sam Houston State University, in 2019 she became Artistic and Executive Director of Boulder Bach Festival.



Zachary Carrettin has performed as violinist, violist, cellist da spalla, and conductor in more than twenty-five countries on four continents, and has established a reputation for presenting diverse programs which feature repertory from the sixteenth to the twenty-first centuries—on period, modern, and electric instruments. He has conducted orchestras across the United States, Europe, and South America. As soloist and music director with Project Bandaloop, he appeared at Wolf Trap Center for the Performing Arts *Face of America* Series, the Stavanger Festival (Norway), and in a private concert for the Sultan and Royal Family of Oman, in Muscat, performing on electric violin.

In the field of historically-inspired period instrument performance, Carrettin appeared as soloist with American Bach Soloists and as guest concertmaster with numerous baroque orchestras including the GRAMMY-nominated recording of Hasse's *Marc' Antonio e Cleopatra* with Ars Lyrica, and the U.S. premiere of Vivaldi's rediscovered opera *Moteczuma* with Musica Angelica and Long Beach Opera. He toured internationally performing Mexican baroque music with El Mundo, and toured the California mission churches

performing with Chanticleer. His recording of Schubert sonatinas on original instruments with pianist Mina Gajić was released in 2020 (Sono Luminus), and the following month hit No. 9 on Billboard Charts traditional classical. During the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown he recorded Bach Cello Suites on baroque viola (Sono Luminus), inspiring the following: “... everything is infused with poetry” (Gramophone Magazine), and, “This performance counsels that we can see the world anew.” (Early Music America)

In chamber music Carrettin has collaborated with the Tokyo Quartet, the Assad Brothers, and with many of the world’s early music luminaries. An advocate of diversity in music, Carrettin toured one-hundred cities with Yanni and shared the stage with Ray Charles, the Black Crowes, Cake, Joan Jett and many others at festivals internationally, as soloist with Project Bandaloop. His original music and recordings have been heard on Late Night with David Letterman, at the Kennedy Center, on CBS Sunday Morning, 60 Minutes, PBS, and on NPR’s Sunday Baroque. His recording in collaboration with pianist Mina Gajić, *Confluence* was released in 2022 (Sono Luminus), and their recording at *Boulder Bach Festival* was released in 2023 (Sono Luminus).

Carrettin holds degrees from Rice University Shepherd School of Music and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and pursued doctoral studies at Rice University, leaving to serve on the faculty at Sam Houston State University as Director of Orchestral Studies, and later at University of Colorado Boulder as interim Director of Early Music Ensembles as well as guest Music Director at Eklund Opera.

Carrettin is currently in his eleventh year as Music Director of Boulder Bach Festival, and in that capacity is the founder of the BBF’s ensemble-in-residence, COmpass REsonance (CORE).

BACH UNCAGED

Producer: Marlan Barry

Recording, Mixing, Mastering Engineer: Daniel Shores

Editing Engineer: Ian Striedter

Assistant Engineer: Joshua Frey

Piano Technician: John Veitch

Photography: Cover art - "Requiem" by Antonio Loro, courtesy of Liane Schaefer; p. 13 - Kinga Leftska

Graphic Design: Joshua Frey

Executive Producer: Collin J. Rae

Recorded at Sono Luminus Studios, Boyce VA

June 21-24, 2022

Recorded in Pyramix with Merging Technologies Horus.

Mastered with Merging Technologies Hapi.

Recorded in DXD at 24 bit, 352.8kHz in Native 7.1.4

Mixed and mastered on Legacy Audio speakers.

legacyaudio.com



© & © 2024 Sono Luminus, LLC. All rights reserved.

PO Box 227, Boyce, VA 22620, USA

sonoluminus.com • info@sonoluminus.com

WARNING: Unauthorized reproduction is prohibited by law and will result in criminal prosecution.

