

# Alina Ibragimova plays solo Bach

**Fri 23 Oct**

Hall One | 6.30pm

LAUNCHING THE 2020–21 SEASON OF

## KINGS PLACE MASTER SERIES



PHOTO: GIORGIA BERTAZZI

### Programme

#### **Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)**

Violin Sonata No. 2 in A minor, BWV 1003 (ca. 1720)

I. Grave

II. Fuga

III. Andante

IV. Allegro

Violin Partita No. 2 in D minor, BWV1004 (ca. 1720)

I. Allemande

II. Courante

III. Sarabande

IV. Gigue

V. Chaconne

**Alina Ibragimova** violin

**This performance will last approx. one hour with no interval**

### Programme Notes

Bach 'the organist' we know, but Bach 'the violinist' still comes as something of a shock. Today, when we think of Johann Sebastian as a performer we tend to envisage him with feet and fingers flying across the keyboards of organs and harpsichords, or his eyes and arms raised to direct his singers and players. There are no contemporary portraits or imaginative 19th-century engravings to help us imagine him with a violin on his shoulder – as it must often have been. Bach's first job was as a string player at the court of Weimar and his son Emanuel tells us that 'until the approach of old age, my father played the violin cleanly and penetratingly and understood to perfection the possibilities of all stringed instruments'.

For Emanuel, the greatness of his father's Six Sonatas & Partitas for solo violin (BWV1001–6) lay not so much in the beauty and integrity of their breathtaking technique, but in their profoundly didactic qualities. 'One of the greatest violinists told me once', he wrote, 'that he had seen nothing more perfect for learning

to be a good violinist, and could suggest nothing better to anyone eager to learn, than the said violin solos without bass'.

Bach probably completed his solo sonatas and partitas some time before 1720 – the date on his handsomely-copied autograph score – while the composer was employed at the Cöthen court. They explore the two most important instrumental forms of his time: the dance-based French suite, and the Italian sonata, with its emphasis on fantasy and fugue. Bach's contemporary, the theorist and composer Johann Mattheson, particularly admired the fugue of Sonata II. Writing in 1737, he quoted the eight notes of the fugue's subject in support of his view that just as the finest sermons 'can be made on three or four words of text' so the best worked-out fugues are often based on the fewest notes. 'Who would believe', he asked, 'that these eight short notes would be so fruitful as to bring forth a Counterpoint of more than a whole sheet of music paper, without unusual extension, and quite naturally?'.

With its astonishing technical and harmonic complexity, the Fugue is indeed the central point of the sonata, flanked by an opening Grave decorated with melodic and rhythmic ornamentations, and a soothing Andante, extricating the performer – and the listener – from sustained contrapuntal density. The following Allegro takes the key back to A minor in a rhythmic and vivid finale.

Each of the three partitas approaches the traditions of the suite from a different angle. In Partita II, Bach saves his fire for the end of the work. After we have heard the four movements which make up the traditional suite (Allamanda-Corrente-Sarabanda-Giga) Bach concludes with an unexpected, additional movement. But this is no mere coda. In length, virtuosity and gravitas this great Ciaccona in D minor surpasses everything that has gone before.

*Programme notes: © Simon Heighes*

## Biography

### Alina Ibragimova

'The immediacy and honesty of Ibragimova's playing has the curious ability to collapse any sense of distance between performer and listener.' *The Guardian*

Performing music from baroque to new commissions on both modern and period instruments, Alina Ibragimova has established a reputation as one of the most accomplished and intriguing violinists of the younger generation. This is illustrated by her prominent presence at the BBC Proms since 2015: aside from concerto performances from the standard repertoire, her Proms appearances have included a concert with a baroque ensemble and two late-night Royal Albert Hall recitals featuring the complete Bach partitas and sonatas, for which *The Guardian* commented "The immediacy and honesty of Ibragimova's playing has the curious ability to collapse any sense of distance between performer and listener". In the 2018 Proms, Alina gave the World Premiere of the Rolf Wallin Violin Concerto with the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Edward Gardner. 18/19 saw a strong focus on Shostakovich Concerto's No. 1 and No. 2, which she performed and recorded with Vladimir Jurowski and the State Academic Symphony Orchestra of Russia.

Recent highlights include her debut with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Sinfonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Swedish Radio, Wiener Symphoniker,

Boston Symphony and return engagements with the London Symphony, Chamber Orchestra of Europe and BBC Symphony Orchestra. As a recitalist Alina has appeared at venues including Wigmore Hall, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Salzburg Mozarteum, Vienna's Musikverein and Carnegie Hall.

Her long-standing duo partnership with pianist Cédric Tiberghien has featured highly successful complete cycles of both the Beethoven violin sonatas and the Mozart sonatas for violin and keyboard at Wigmore Hall. Future plans for the duo also include extensive touring in Japan and North America. Alina is also a founding member of the Chiaroscuro Quartet. Together they have toured and recorded extensively since 2005 and have become one of the most sought-after period ensembles.

Born in Russia in 1985, Alina studied at the Moscow Gnesin School before moving with her family to the UK in 1995 where she studied at the Yehudi Menuhin School and Royal College of Music. She was also a member of the Kronberg Academy Masters programme. Alina's teachers have included Natasha Boyarsky, Gordan Nikolitch and Christian Tetzlaff.

Alina has been the recipient of awards including the Royal Philharmonic Society Young Artist Award 2010, the Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award 2008, the Classical BRIT Young Performer of the Year Award 2009 and was a member of the BBC New Generation Artists Scheme 2005-7. She was made an MBE in the 2016 New Year Honours List. Alina records for Hyperion Records and performs on a c.1775 Anselmo Bellosio violin kindly provided by Georg von Opel.

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