

Mp3 Magnus Svensson - Svensson Plays Bach



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Magnus Svensson is an up and coming European concert pianist from Sweden. His interpretation of Bach is extremely sensitive. "Magnus Svensson joins my favourites with...an entirely new span of intensity and content." Rolf Haglund, Borås Tidning, Stockholm 11 MP3 Songs CLASSICAL: Traditional, CLASSICAL: Contemporary Details: Svensson plays Bach: Recorded at the Nybrokajen 11 Concert Hall in Stockholm, Sweden, August 10, 11 and 12, 2001. Produced by David G. Christensen

MAGNUS SVENSSON Pianist Magnus Svensson grew up in a musical family in the forests of southwestern Sweden. His father Lars is a carpenter and amateur violinist and it is from him that Magnus found his love of classical music. But it wasn't until the age of 15 that Magnus began his serious piano studies. He gained wisdom and musical knowledge from professor Stella Tjajkowski at the Gothenburg School of Music. Tjajkowski remained his principal teacher until he graduated from the Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm with a post graduate diploma in music performance as well as the honorary medal for best student in 1998. During his graduate studies, Magnus studied with professor Staffan Scheja as well as Dimitri Bashkirov. He also took classes in lied-interpretation for Geoffrey Parsons in London. Magnus has an extensive repertoire, with an emphasis on Baroque and classicism and has dedicated entire recitals to the works of Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, Mozart and Schumann. His concert engagements have taken him to United States, Germany, France, England, the Netherlands, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Russia, the Baltic States and all the Scandinavian countries, including Iceland, the Faeroes and Greenland. Magnus' next CD titled "Svensson plays Mozart" was recorded in December, 2002 and is scheduled for a Spring 2003 release.

Svensson on Bach When one looks at the collected works of Johann Sebastian Bach one is impressed by Bach's incomprehensible productivity. How could one and the same man have had the time to compose so much splendid music, when he also taught, worked as an organist as well as an

orchestral conductor? And many of his compositions are presumed lost. (Principally from the Cthen period.) His several positions as organist kept him busy writing music for the entire church year and in addition he also composed for various courts, his sons, daughters and his wife, Anna Magdalena. He must have always had writing materials at hand, even when he was sent to prison, after a dispute with his employer in Cthen! When he was finally released he had a large stack of newly written choral preludes and solo pieces.. Bach himself summed up his immense artistic achievement with the following somewhat condescending quote: " I have worked hard. Those who work as diligently should achieve the same results." Bach's Toccatas for the harpsichord belong to his most eccentric compositions; large-scale, brilliantly rhapsodic and choleric as they are. Each and everyone of these toccatas have their own structure, but they all have one, often two, fugal moments woven into frenetic passages. Toccata in D-major BWV612, starts cockily and a bit bombastic but soon finds a jovial theme with a contagiously cheerful tonal language, playful, yet not weightless. The happiness changes abruptly and is replaced by a fateful recitative that is reminiscent of Vivaldi. The fugue is fumbling, sad and on the verge of dejected. Little do we suspect the dissolution of the drama, with a second dangerously fierce fugue that culminates in an explosion of triads and we are reminded of the fact that the Toccata actually was written in major. Throughout his life Bach wrote choral preludes for the organ, both for Sunday services and for his teaching. They combine a rhetorical and expressive tone language with a refined counterpoint and play a large part in Bach's another works. The first choral prelude Nun komm' der Heiden Heiland, BWV659, is a magical piece of music. It's an advent hymn with lyrics by Martin Luther: Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland Come now, Saviour of the heathen Der Jungfrauen Kind erkannt He who is known as the Child of the Virgin! Des sich wunder alle Welt, All the world wonders that Gott solch Geburt ihm bestellt. God should ordain such a birth Throughout the whole work there is a suppressed and mystical bass line on which an expressive cantus firmus rests. The cantus firmus converses with a bittersweet counterpoint and its mournful semi-quavers lends the prelude a profoundly introverted character. There is no brightening up before the very last chord. Ich ruf' zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ BWV639, is a heartfelt prayer about being able to believe, whole-heartedly and unreserved. Ich ruf' zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ, I call to Thee, Lord Jesus Christ, ich bitt, erhr mein Klagen: O hear my sore complaining! Verleih mir Gnad zu dieser Frist, In Thy good time unto me list, la mich doch nicht verzagen. Thine ear to me inclining! Den rechten Glauben, Herr, ich mein, True faith in Thee, O Lord, I seek; den wollest du mir geben, O make me now and wholly

dir zu leben, Love Thee solely, Mein Nchsten ntz zu sein, my neighbour hold as self, dein Wort zu halten eben. And keep Thy word e'er holy. A major part of Bach's music is inspired by the dance. In the French Suite in G Major BWV816, he plays masterfully with the classic allemande, the swift courante, the sweet but distinct sarabande and finally a recklessly virtuoso gigue. Together these four dances make the traditional Suite. Between them Bach put an elegant gavotte, followed by a fleeting bourre and eventually an adorably proud and gentle loure. This suite is not more French than any of the English Suites. It is quite the opposite, but remain nevertheless one of Bach's true masterpieces. It is not presumptuous to claim that Bach in many ways owes a debt of gratitude to composers like Brahms, Mendelssohn, Liszt and Reger for the fantastic popularity his music enjoys today. His death in 1750 clearly marked the end of the Baroque music era and in fact Bach's music was considered antiquated the last ten years of the composer's life. His masses, cantatas, toccatas, sonatas and choral preludes soon fell into silence and didn't experience a renaissance until almost eighty years later, when Mendelssohn presented Bach's St Matthew Passion in Berlin. Mendelssohn believed that the music was still in need of rejuvenation. So he launched himself into the score and freely and easily re-orchestrate the entire piece. What would Bach have thought about that? Through out history, composers have borrowed music from each other to present that music in a different light. Bach himself was a diligent thief. He often borrowed from himself as well as from his colleagues. The violin concertos by Vivaldi became grandiose organ pieces in the hands of Bach. Many of the great 19th century composers began making their own arrangements of Bach's neglected and often forgotten masterpieces. Their ambition was obviously not to interpret the Great Master in an absolutely authentic manner, but to once again draw the audience's attention to the art of Bach, perhaps with a romantic touch. During the second half of last century, music puritans reversed this trend, striving to approach Bach's music with great purity to get as close as possible to the ideals of the composer. It's true that the music has to be performed in a way true to the art as well as the composer, but over the years it has come clear that interpretation is for both the composer as well as the musicians. After all, "since the notation of a work is the transcription of an abstract idea," as Ferruccio Busoni put it, "every performance is a transcription". Among Bach's very finest compositions we find the Partita in d-minor, BWV1004, for solo violin. It concludes with the magnificent Chaconne in d-minor, where Bach boldly stretches every bound of the form to its utmost. The chaconne is an old dance that the Spanish developed in the New World in the end of 16th century. Some said that it was invented by the devil

himself, because of its vehement and provocative character. No one, not even the Church, escaped the mocking lyrics and its mischievous message. However, the German chaconne differentiates itself from the southern European and Bach's interpretation of the form shows very little sign of the exhilaration that normally characterized the dance. Transcribing a piece from the solo violin to the piano is not only bold, it takes a man like Ferruccio Busoni with his inexorable feeling for musical geometry and sonority, to pull it off. (Earlier Brahms had also made a transcription of the same chaconne, but for left hand only.) Busoni was one of the greatest piano virtuosos of his time and also a composer with the deepest admiration for Bach's music. The chaconne has a majestic, but complaining theme where the original dance rhythm with a heavy second beat that strengthens the urgency of the gesticulation. The pianist and listener are never allowed to relax in the first section, for under the surface it seethes with anxiety and the faster the notes get, the more alarmed the atmosphere becomes. It escalates to a tremendous eruption of fantastic tone-cascades where the performer's virtuosity is tested. And then - suddenly - a dolce where the heat spreads in the entire body when the music for the first time changes to major. Busoni writes quasi Tromboni, so that we won't play the section too softly. This new theme in major is fondly worked on and thoroughly varied before a recitativo - the first - spreads out, exceedingly introverted and unobtrusive. Soon ominous chromatics mix with the harmonics and this eventually leads to a last outburst, where the very lowest of the piano's keys once and for all secure the triumph of gravity.

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