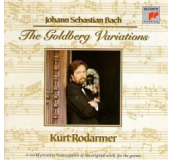


J.S. Bach - The Goldberg Variations (for guitar) 1998

Written by bluesever

Thursday, 20 May 2010 13:09 - Last Updated Friday, 09 August 2013 22:07

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1. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Aria*
2. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 1*
3. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 2*
4. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 3, Canone all'Unisono*
5. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 4*
6. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 5*
7. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 6, Canone alla Seconda*
8. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 7*
9. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 8*
10. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 9, Canone alla Terza*
11. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 10, Fughetta*
12. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 11*
13. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 12, Canone alla Quarta*
2:16
14. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 13*
15. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 14*
16. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 15, Canone alla Quinta*
in moto contrario
17. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 16, Ouverture*
18. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 17*
19. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 18, Canone alla Sesta*
20. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 19*
21. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 20*
22. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 21, Canone alla Settima*
23. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 22, Alla breve*
24. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 23*
25. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 24, Canone all'Ottava*
26. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 25*
27. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 26*
28. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 27, Canone alla Nona*
29. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 28*
30. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 29*
31. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Variation 30, Quodlibet*

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32. *Aria with 30 Variations, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")/Aria da capo*

Kurt Rodarmer – guitar

It's not just technical achievements that Rodarmer has to offer; he also makes a beautiful sound, at once lustrous and warm, and has an impressive sense of style.

Turning to what Sony bills as a world premiere transcription of the Goldberg Variations for guitar, I was incredulous. Maybe the Goldbergs could be cogently presented, I thought, on the lute, which is an instrument well suited to polyphonic writing, but how could its complex textures be clearly rendered on the essentially harmony-oriented guitar?

Fortunately, it turns out that Kurt Rodarmer (about whom Sony vouchsafes no biographical information) agrees with me. Combining the roles of arranger, performer, and producer, he has made his version for multiple guitars, anything from two to four of them, "recording each part separately and later mixing them down." Naturally there is a certain loss where the virtuoso conquest of technical demands is concerned, but this, as many may feel and as Glenn Gould used to argue passionately, is by no means necessarily a bad thing.

In any case, Rodarmer's dazzling finger skills still make a tremendous impression, especially by virtue of the combination of speed, steadiness, and clarity with which he dispatches such variations as No. 23, with its rapid parallel thirds and whirlwind cadential scales. In variations like Nos. 6, 21, and 24 Bach's canonic writing emerges with unusual lucidity. Nor are such technical achievements all Rodarmer has to offer. He makes a beautiful sound, at once lustrous and warm, that is vividly captured by the very clear sound. He realizes textures like those of the two-manual Variation 20 with a sure feeling for their drama. And he has an impressive sense of style, which is given expression by some elegant long grace notes in the Aria itself and in the 9/8 meter of Variation 24, and also by some well-conceived changes of articulation in the repeats.

These latter, by the way, are omitted in the Aria but included in the variations, with only a few exceptions. The decision to omit the first of the two repeats in Variation 16 but to include the second one seems perverse, since this variation is designed in the form of a French overture,

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with stately introduction and dancelike fast section, and that is a genre where the tradition of repeating the introduction was surely invariable in Bach's time.

Aside from one or two such minutiae, and from a slightly mechanical feeling in the treatment of the minor-mode Variation 25 (where, perhaps symptomatically, both repeats are ignored), I found both the conception of Rodarmer's arrangement—a refreshing blend of artistic respect with absence of pomposity—highly persuasive. Like Bach on the accordion, I wouldn't want to hear Goldberg on the guitar every time. But I am glad to have both in my collection to indulge in as an occasional and artistically worthwhile treat. -- Bernard Jacobson, FANFARE [5/1998], arkivmusic.com

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