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**C. P. E. BACH Sonatas: in d**, Wq 51/4; **in c**, Wq 65/31; **in g**, Wq 65/17; **in G**, Wq 65/22; **in d**, Wq 69 • Jocelyne Cuiller (clvd) • LIGIA 0101236 (54:36)

This excellent album features five of C. P. E. Bach's remarkable and highly original keyboard sonatas, played on the clavichord by Jocelyne Cuiller, who teaches harpsichord and basso continuo at the Conservatory of Nantes. The notes indicate that she has a "passion for research" into historical performance practice, particularly of the basso continuo, and this shows in her execution of these sonatas. Cuiller adopts the Baroque practice of playing these works with an irregular meter, introducing rhetorical phrasing and stutter-start phrasing. This particular style of playing, which is particularly well suited to the music of Buxtehude, also serves C. P. E. Bach well, emphasizing his music's unique structure and startling rhythmic and harmonic changes—nowhere more evident than in the first movement *Allegro* of the Sonata in g, Wq 65/17, where the composer's stunning melodic and rhythmic quirks (particularly the unexpected bass note in C when your ear is expecting D<sup>b</sup>) are brilliantly drawn out by Cuiller's playing. (Please note, however, that since these sonatas are all played at a lower pitch, the note in question is actually a B at A= 440.)

The sound quality of this disc is also quite spectacular, the instrument being surrounded by what sounds like empty-room ambience, just enough to give an attractive sheen to the sound of Cuiller's instrument without overdoing it. The album is titled *Sonates pour Yukio* as the artist's tribute and reaction to the stories of Japanese author Yukio Mishima, who famously committed hara-kiri at the age of 45, but since they lived 200 years apart the connection is solely in the artist's imagination. I, for one, can easily enjoy these works, and Cuiller's playing of them, without the extra-musical connection. This is a first-rate disc. **Lynn René Bayley**

**This article originally appeared in Issue 37:3 (Jan/Feb 2014) of *Fanfare Magazine*.**

**Carl Philipp Emanuel BACH (1714 - 1788) - Nicholson MusicWeb**

Sonata in a minor (Wq 50,3 / H 138) [10:25]

Sonata in G (Wq 50,2 / H 137) [11:22]

Sonata in d minor (Wq 50,4 / H 139) [11:36]

[Kurze und leichte Clavierstücke, 1765/66 (Wq 113 / H 193-203)]

Allegro in G (H 193) [:58]

Arioso in C (H 194) [1:05]

Fantasia in d minor (H 195) [0:22]

Minuetto in F (H 196) [2:52]

Alla polacca in a minor (H 197) [1:25]

Allegretto in D (H 198) [0:58]  
Alla polacca in b minor (H 199) [1:19]  
Allegretto in A (H 200) [1:08]  
Andante e sostenuto in g minor (H 201) [1:19]  
Presto in B flat (H 202) [0:41]  
Allegro in d minor (H 203) [1:07]  
[Kurze und leichte Clavierstücke, II, 1767 (Wq 114 / H 228-238)]  
Allegro di molto in F (H 228) [0:36]  
Andante e grazioso in g minor (H 229) [2:13]  
Presto in c minor (H 230) [1:08]  
Minuetto in G (H 231) [2:49]  
Alla polacca in D (H 232) [0:59]  
Alla polacca in E flat (H 233) [1:40]  
Fantasia in d minor (H 234) [1:08]  
Allegro in E (H 235) [1:06]  
Allegretto in A (H 236) [2:02]  
Andante in C (H 237) [1:29]  
Poco allegro in e minor (H 238) [1:11]  
Linda Nicholson (clavichord)  
rec. 21-22 February 1988, Great Hall, Forde Abbey, Dorset, UK. DDD  
**PHOENIX EDITION 451** [63:08]

Ornamentation is one of the main issues in performance practice of early music. Composers expected the performers of their compositions to add ornaments of their own. However, some were rather sceptical about the abilities of in particular non-professional players in this department and decided to write out all ornaments. François Couperin was one of them and there is a continuing debate among Bach scholars and interpreters whether Bach's music needs to be ornamented and if so, how much should be added to what he has written down.

His son Carl Philipp Emanuel also showed concern about the capabilities of the players of his music. In the liner-notes of the present disc he is quoted with this statement: "It is expected that virtually every idea be subjected to variations on restatement, irrespective of whether the structure of the piece or the ability of the performer allow it ... These untimely variations are often contrary to the style, the emotional mood and the relationship of the ideas to each other; an unpleasant matter for any composer". It is not without reason that during the baroque period, and especially in the 18th century when more and more amateurs started to play, several treatises were published with instructions as to how to add ornaments in a technically correct and stylistically appropriate manner.

Some composers published music with the special purpose of instructing the players in this matter. So did Carl Philipp Emanuel: this disc includes three of six sonatas which he published in 1760 under the title, translated in English: "Six

sonatas for keyboard with ornamented repeats". He dedicated them to Princess Amalia of Prussia, the sister of his employer Frederic the Great. For her he had also written six sonatas for organ, and it is unlikely that she belonged to the category for which he composed these sonatas. She was a skilled performer and must have been able to add ornaments of her own in a tasteful way. At the time of publication Bach's keyboard works were very popular among music-lovers in Germany. He soon developed into the most important composer of keyboard music in Germany. That could only maximize the effect of these instructive sonatas.

Probably even more effective were the other pieces on this disc: "Short and easy keyboard pieces with ornamented repeats and additional fingerings for beginners". They were printed in two volumes in 1765 or 1766 and 1767 respectively. These are remarkable pieces: they may be quite short - some are less than half a minute - but they are still full of ideas and expression. A striking example of an expressive piece is the *Andante e sostenuto in g minor* (H 201) from the first collection. Although they are called "easy" some of them are not that simple, such as the *Fantasia in d minor* (H 234) from the second collection. This shows strong similarity with the Chromatic fantasia of Johann Sebastian.

The clavichord is the right choice for this repertoire. It was excellently suited to be played in domestic surroundings because of its soft sound. It was especially popular in Germany and was built in large numbers. Linda Nicholson is a brilliant interpreter who perfectly knows how to treat this kind of instrument. She plays a clavichord by one of Germany's most famous builders, Johann Adolph Hass, built in 1767 and fully explores its dynamic possibilities in a most sensitive way. Her interpretations are compelling, also due to a subtle use of rubato. That helps to bring out the dramatic and expressive features of these pieces. A contemporary critic stated that one didn't need to fear "finding anything bad among his [Emanuel's] works". This disc bears witness to that.

***Johan van Veen***