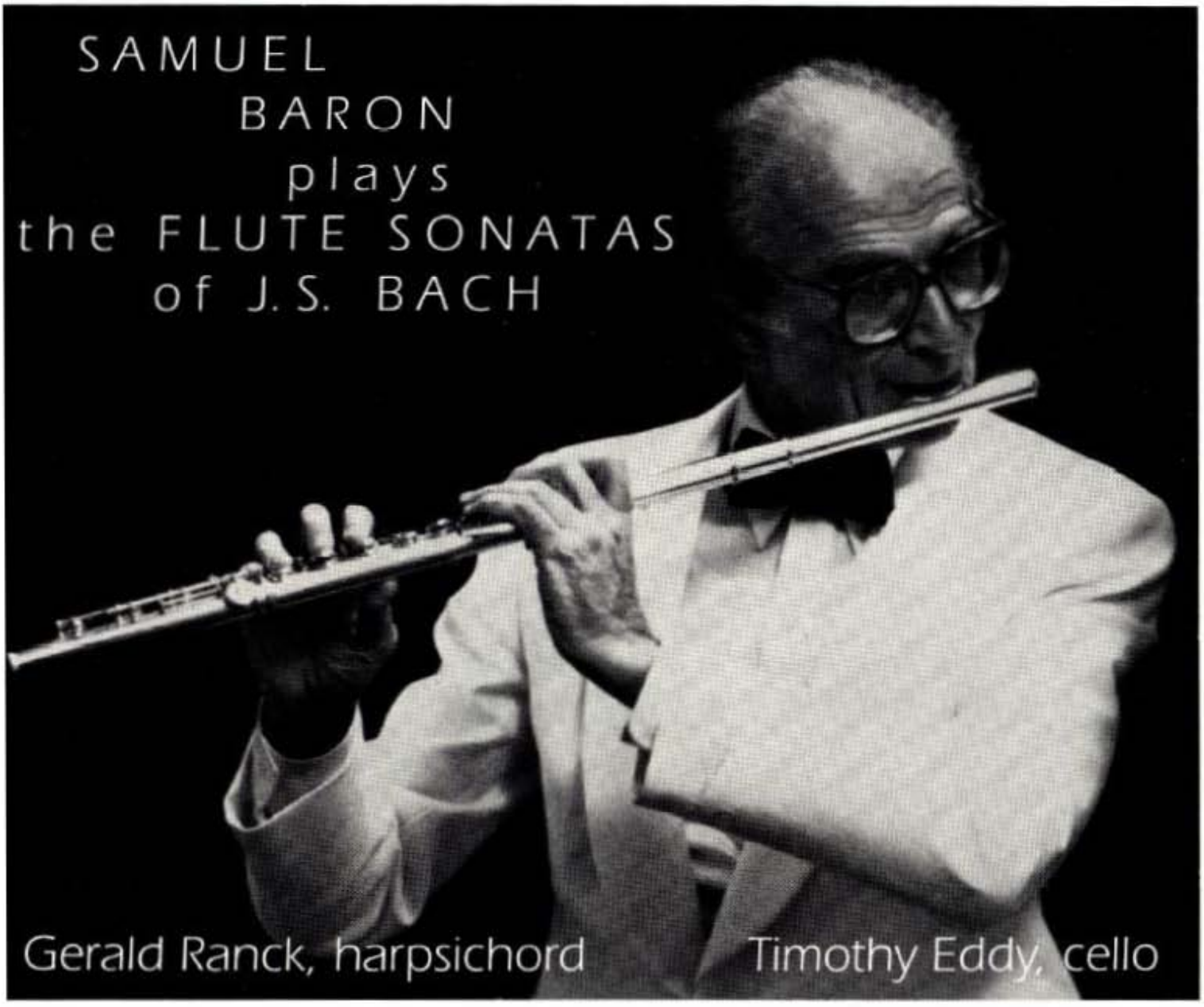
Music from the Bach Aria Festival and Institute



CD 106

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The Bach sonatas for flute and continuo, and the sonatas for flute and harpsichord as well, comprise a fascinating segment of Bach's chamber music.

It seems almost certain that all of the Bach flute sonatas date from after 1717, which is supposed to be the time that Bach first encountered the transverse flute. The occasion was Bach's visit to Dresden of that year. When he heard the celebrated flutist, Pierre-Gabriel Buffardin, a transplanted Frenchman who was a star performer in the orchestra of the court. It is interesting to realize that Bach did not know this instrument (the ancestor of our modern flute), until he was 32 years of age, but that he adopted it enthusiastically and, indeed, wrote some of the music that shaped its early development. Even more important to us is the fact that he wrote some of the greatest flute music that anyone ever composed.

I have been studying and playing the Bach flute sonatas for about as long as I have been playing the flute. I come back to them time and again, always with pleasure, and always discovering new facets of their beauty, elegance, and profundity.

My career as a flutist spans many years of excitement in the rediscovery, so to speak, for our times of baroque music in general, and of Johann Sebastian Bach's music in particular. Especially in the area of "correct" performance practice the world of music has witnessed many waves of fashion in how this repertoire is presented to listeners, and how it is accepted by them. The quest for "authenticity" in performance has energized many scholars and performers to study and restudy the scores (preferably in urtext editions) as well as the literature that has come down to us from the period relating to the music and its performance. I would venture to say that Quantz' Treatise on Playing the Flute and C.P.E. Bach's True Art of Clavier Playing have had more readers in the second half of the twentieth century than they had in the second half of the 18th century when they were new and addressed directly to fellow musicians, for these books are more than instruction manuals in instrumental techniques. They are treasure troves of historical performance practice.

The popularity of period instruments has familiarized audiences with different sounds, with different ways of playing, with different tunings, articulations, phrasings, tonal balances, and so on. Many musicians have taken the plunge and learned the baroque forms of their instruments. They testify to the naturalness of the music when it is executed on the instrument appropriate to the composer's lifetime.

My approach to the Bach sonatas has not followed that particular path. I have not learned the baroque traverso and do not play it, though I love to listen to the playing of such traverso artists as Stasny, Kuijken, Linde, at al, and have learned much from them. My main approach to the Bach flute sonatas has been through the flute music that Bach wrote for his cantatas in Leipzig. In this repertoire, especially in the obbligato parts for the arias, one gets Bach's true feeling for what the flute could

express, how the instrument could be made to talk - yes, talk - for that is one of the main essences of baroque music making. In the texted music, the flute could express through its tones the meanings and symbols of words that the singer would give utterance to directly.

I consider it one of the most fortunate experiences of my musical life that I was invited to join the Bach Aria Group in 1965 as flute soloist and performed in many concerts and concert tours with this wonderful ensemble of vocal and instrumental artists. I later took over the the musical directorship in 1980 on the retirement of William H. Scheide, who was the founder of the group, and to whom I pay tribute as one of my best teachers.

The E flat Sonata has been the subject of a controversy ever since the NBA (Neue Bach Ausgabe) did not include it in the volume of Bach's flute sonatas saying that it was a work whose "authenticity could not be definitely established." By this the editors meant that the music could not be found in a manuscript in the handwriting of Johann Sebastian Bach. The fact that the music was found in the library of Carl Phillip Emanuel Bach with the notation in Carl Phillip's own hand that this sonata was the work of Johann Sebastian was not taken to be definitive. Why? There seem to be two arguments that inhibited the editors from allowing this sonata to enter the canon; one is a belief that attribution by Bach's sons of music to the authorship of their father is somehow suspect. The other is that the style of this composition seems to be not typical of Johann Sebastian's music. In my opinion, both of these arguments are weak, and subsequent researches by scholars in this field have somewhat turned opinions around in favor of authenticating this sonata. (I would say, incidentally, that flutists never lost faith in this beautiful work and that its popularity continued undiminished despite its initial "downgrading".)

What are the musical characteristics of the E flat Sonata? The outer movements present elegant dialogues between the flute and the right hand part of the harpsichord, lyrical and decorative in the first movement, energetic and spirited in the third and final movement. The second movement, by contrast, is a lovely song for the wind instrument with a lute-like accompaniment for the harpsichord. The movement has the characteristic lilting rhythm of the Siciliano and possesses a ravishing beauty.

I have no answer to the question of why this composition raised suspicions on stylistic grounds among musicologists. In my opinion the very opening of the first movement contains a fingerprint of Johann Sebastian Bach's. It starts with a harpsichord solo, deferring the flute entrance for eight bars, until the harpsichord has reached a strong cadence. Then the flute enters singing a different melody from the one played by the right hand of the keyboard. This new melody is vocal in nature contrasting vividly with the harpsichord solo which is completely instrumental in style, athletically so. This contrast is characteristic of the arias for solo voice with instrumental obbligato and continuo from Bach's Leipzig-period cantatas. In aria after aria Bach presents the instrumentalist playing the first

ritornello in a style that suggests an instrumental sonata. When the voice enters, singing a different melody - with text, of course, - we realize that we are hearing two kinds of music that will combine, and whose combinations will dictate the progress of the composition. We realize further that the meaning of the text if not the actual words, have already been prefigured in the instrumental obbligato. My conclusion is that Bach adapted for chamber music a compositional type which he had made his own in texted music. This procedure appears in the E flat Sonata and in the A major Sonata, which has a similar opening, i.e. an instrumental harpsichord solo and a delayed entrance of the flute, playing a vocal kind of melody which combines later with the harpsichord motive.

The E minor Sonata is the most virtuosic of the Bach sonatas, the most demanding technically for the flutist, and the most thrilling. Each movement develops its own ideas with rigorous logic and with unrelenting energy. The first, a dialogue between the walking bass line with its measured tread and the expressive, curved, and syncopated flute melody establishes a dramatic confrontation immediately. The opposing ideas interact with each other and interpenetrate. The entire range of the baroque traverso is employed in this movement, from the lowest D at the bottom of the staff to the highest G three ledger lines above it. The second movement is a marathon for the flutist with very little breathing space. It combines two compositional ideas: a two-voiced fugue with a lively, jumping subject, and a toccata for the solo flute in which arpeggios are tossed around with only a bare accompaniment. The fugal textures and the toccata textures alternate, creating an increasing drive to the final cadence, elaborated by an brief but intense cadenza.

My own favorite movement in this sonata is the third. This movement, marked Adagio ma non tanto, starts with a six measure bass figure which proves to be an ostinato line. It repeats itself three times in a row, while the flute melody, entering at bar seven, spins itself out above it. One has the irresistible experience of an improvisational game. How many choruses can the melody line evolve over this recurring bass progression?

Bach provides a respite from the rigorous repetitions in a middle section where the ostinato line begins to appear in a "broken" fashion. During these breaks, the flute line restlessly moves outside the key of the confining G major which has bounded the music up till this point. The music modulates to a strong cadence in E minor, and then to a somewhat calmer, yet eloquent cadence in B minor, at which point it stops. A one bar cadenza for the flute leads to a return of the opening ostinato, followed by two more "choruses" before the peaceful end. A large part of the beauty of this movement lies in its formal design which presents a "play within a play", as it were. The framing sections, beginning and end, are securely within G major. Even though the melody evolves freely over the ostinato,it is always contained within this one tonality. The middle section, however, while it is constructed on elements of the same ostinato, is adventurous and passionate. It breaks outside the

fence of the confining tonality and expresses a different kind of freedom from the first and last sections. The return of the G major ostinato s creates a peaceful and "resolved" conclusion.

The final movement of the E minor Sonata is full of energy. Once again the full gamut of the Bach's flute, (in tonal range and in athletic display) is employed; elaborate passage work is called for. To put a fitting climax to the movement as well as to sonata as a whole, Bach explodes some thunderbolts of harmony near the end of each of the two sections of this movement.

The mighty B minor Sonata, BWV 1030, is of course the keystone of this literature. It is, in my opinion, the greatest flute sonata ever written. It has a grandeur and a dramatic power rarely reached in a composition of chamber music proportions; it presents chromatic complexities of great richness. Each movement is powerfully individual. The second movement is a most sublime slow movement with a nobly arched melodic curve; the compact solidity of the fugal introduction to the final gigue strikes like a fist, and the final gigue has an irresistible momentum generated by the intense syncopations of its first theme.

Subtle unifying touches abound in this sonata. For example, the fugue and the gigue share the same theme. But this "theme" is not so much a melody as a tone row fragment! The first notes of the fugue subject are B,D,C#,G,F# and so are the first notes of the gigue (if we disregard the sixteenth note upbeat in the flute part).

All the movements of this sonata are composed in the same tempo, despite the fact that each one has a completely different meter. For example, the first movement values of eighth note and sixteenth note almost exactly equal the sixteenth note and thirty-second note of the second movement, which almost exactly equal the whole note and half note of the fugue, which almost exactly equal the dotted half and dotted quarter of the gigue.

I have always felt that it is a privilege to play this sonata and I still do, especially with a partner as lively and creative as Gerald Ranck.

The E major Sonata is by far the most elegant of all the Bach sonatas. This work presents an example of Bach writing a composition deliberately in a style that he felt was suitable for the performers who would be most interested in it, for this piece went with Bach to Potsdam when he visited the musical establishment of Frederick the Great. Frederick the Great was a dedicated avocational flutist, who kept his private flute teacher as a member of his personal staff, and also retained a spiffy chamber orchestra to accompany him whenever he felt like playing music. He also composed music, almost all works for the flute, many, many concertos and sonatas. (There is some suspicion that he was helped in his composition by his private and personal teacher, J.J. Quantz.) The contact between Bach, the sober church musician, and the glittery court of the emperor was made by

Carl Phillip Emanuel Bach who was employed as keyboard player in the aforementioned chamber orchestra.

Not only is the style of this sonata gallant, it is also French. How can we ascertain this, and what exactly is the French fingerprint that can be perceived in this sonata? It is the spirit of the dance that characterizes French baroque music and specifically French dance forms that enliven this sonata.

In the E major Sonata after the broadly lyrical slow first movement we have three dance forms. The second movement is a Rigaudon, the third is a Siciliano, and the fourth is a Rejouissance. These movements are not titled as dance forms, they rather employ the Italian tempo words of the sonata da chiesa, but the characteristic rhythms give them away.

Another underlying French touch to this music is the fact that the transverse flute, an invention of French musicians, came to Germany by means of French flutists. The great Buffardin, whom bach had met earlier in Dresden, was an import from Paris. He singlehandedly popularized the flute in Germany and counted among his students the self same Quantz who ended up in the employ of the emperor.

Quite a literature has developed around the A major Sonata (BWV 1032) in recent years. The manuscript on which the old Bachgesellschaft edition was based disappeared during World war II and was presumed lost forever. Furthermore this manuscript, an autograph, was the only source for this composition.

Because of an unusual mutilation in the autograph, this sonata could never be printed in an intact form; there was a gap of 46-48 measures in the middle of the first movement. For many years the sonata appeared in print in many editions as a two movement work, a slow movement in A minor and a final, lively movement in A major. The Bachgesellschaft edition did print all the surviving measures and indicated the gap.

In 1977, to the joy of Bach scholars everywhere, the long lost autograph surfaced again. This rediscovery prompted an unusually close study of the manuscript, with the goal of revealing the conditions of the mysterious gap. Two questions have been energetically pursued: who made the mutilation, and why.

The autograph itself is most unusual because it is a double autograph containing not one, but two, Bach compositions. The major portion of the pages contain a concerto for two harpsichords, strings and continuo in C minor. (It is the same music as the somewhat better known concerto for two violins , strings and continuo in D minor.) The concerto occupies the top 16 staves of the page. The bottom three staves of each page are not occupied by the concerto. It is on these three staves that Bach entered the flute sonata.

On page after page of this double manuscript, we witness the unfolding of both these works

until somewhere in the middle of the first movement of the flute sonata the bottom three staves are cut off. The flute sonata vanishes, and only the concerto can be seen. Twelve pages after the commencement of this mutilation, it ends, and the flute sonata reappears. The estimate of the missing number of bars was already made in the last century by the editors of the Bachgesellschaft. It is based on the number pf pages cut (12) and the number of measures that Bach had been fitting on to each page (usually four but occasionally three).When the flute sonata resumes we find ourselves in the last three measures of the first movement.

Alongside the scholarly research connected with the questions who and why, another activity has grown up, namely attempts to restore this movement by means of a relatively intact, performable version. Here, different standards apply which go beyond the rigorously applied standards of documentary evidence. I have tried to explain the challenge by the following analogy. Imagine a statue of Greek antiquity unearthed in an excavation on one of the Greek islands. A beautiful torso is discovered with one arm broken off below the shoulder. Nearby a hand sculpted of the same material is found. It seems clear that the hand and the body were originally part of the same sculpture, but the missing portions of the arm cannot be found. Can this work of art ever be displayed? Various approaches are possible. A museum might display the torso as it was found with the arm missing, and even display the hand possibly with an explanation or description of the archeological circumstances involved in the discovery of two fragments that so tantalizingly seem to be part of one and the same art work. However, tacking the hand right onto the upper arm would not be a reasonable way to display the art work; it would be so manifestly a distortion of natural form that it would be worse than displaying the mutilated form. For this reason, when I made my own reconstruction of the first movement, I felt obliged to reconstruct a form that had its own natural symmetry, and which could be found in other Bach compositions. This reconstruction can be heard on this CD.

The second movement, in A minor, is a three voice composition in which the two treble voices, the flute and the right hand of the harpsichord engage in dialogue with the bass line, played by the left hand of the harpsichord. This disposition of voices has led some scholars to speculate that this sonata may have had an older form as a trio sonata. In any case, it is a sober, reflective piece, with great melodic beauty.

The final movement, a fugue in 3/8 time is a gem, a movement so full of life that it practically dances off the page. A contrasting middle section presents a totally different subject, which gets its own fugal treatment. This subject is in minor and has two unusual diminished intervals in it. In the course of the unfolding of this fugue subject, the original fugue subject returns now and again, somewhat subdued. But when this section comes to an end, the original subject returns joyously in the home key of A major.

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Samuel Baron is a truly multi-faceted musician. In his long and busy career, he has taken on the roles of flute soloist, chamber music player, conductor, teacher, and scholar, often blending these roles in simultaneous fashion. He is a legend among American flutists for his wide ranging interests in the flute repertoire.

As a flute soloist, Samuel Baron's career is replete with first performances, American premieres, and first recorded performances. Among the composers whose works he has so furthered are Blackwood, Korte, Kupferman, Laderman, Martino, Riegger, Boulez, Jolivet, Villa-Lobos, and Wolpe. Many of these performances and recordings involved close working relationships with the composers.

Samuel Baron was a founding member of the New York Woodwind Quintet. This ensemble, now over forty years old, has always been a powerful force in new music, and is in residence at the Juilliard School in New York.

A turning point in Samuel Baron's musical life came when he was invited to join the Bach Aria Group as flute soloist in 1965. He found the repertoire of the Bach cantata music endlessly fascinating and has devoted a major portion of his activity to it ever since.

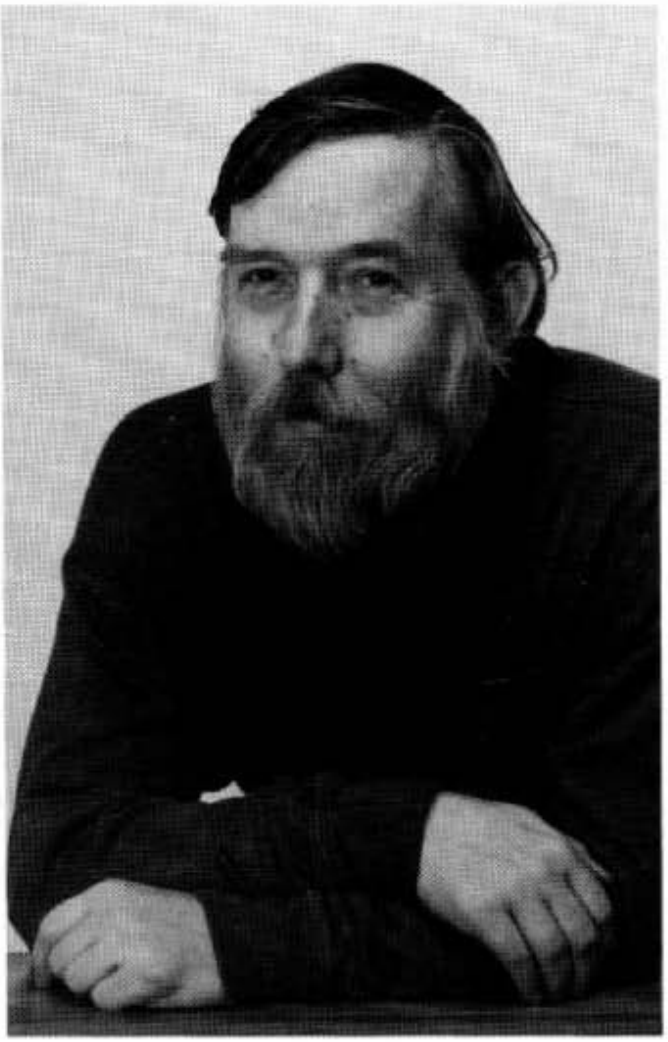
Samuel Baron served as assistant conductor to Igor Stravinsky in recording sessions of his own works and was conductor in the Musica Aeterna Series of chamber orchestra concerts at the Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The teacher of many outstanding younger flutists, he is also known in the flute world as a master coach for professional players. His activities as a teacher have taken him to many parts of the world. He currently holds two major teaching posts at the State University of New York at Stony Brook and at the Juilliard School.

It is his interest in the music of J.S. Bach that returns again and again as a leitmotiv of his work. Among his publications in the field of Bach's music are the restoration and completion of the A major Sonata for flute and harpsichord, and a transcription of the entire Art of the Fugue for chamber music performance by nine players.

In 1980, Samuel Baron became the music director of the Bach Aria Group, establishing a prestigious Institute for Bach performance studies. With the members of the Bach Aria Group as faculty, the Bach Aria Festival and Institute attracts outstanding vocalists and instrumentalists every June to the State University of New York at Stony Brook. Festival concerts are sold-out events at which Baron performs as soloist with the Bach Aria Group and conducts performances of Bach's orchestral and vocal music.

Gerald Ranck was born in Pennsylvania. He attended the Eastman school of Music as a pianist, but came to New York where he decided to play the harpsichord. He studied with Sylvia Marlow at the Mannes College of Music and made his debut in 1966. In 1969 he made the first recording in stereo of Henry Purcell's harpsichord music, and appeared in Europe for the first time in 1976 (London and Teheran). In 1985 and 1986 he performed a cycle of Bach's complete solo harpsichord music at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York. He has toured with the Bach Aria Group and is resident harpsichordist with Clarion Concerts. Mr. Ranck played at at Drottringholm Court Theatre in Stockholm in 1990. In 1992 he will begin a cycle of Domenico Scarlatti's 555 harpsichord sonatas at the New York Society for Ethical Culture, where he has been music director since 1984.



Timothy Eddy has earned distinction as a recitalist, soloist with orchestra, chamber musician, recording artist, and as a winner in numerous national and international competitions. In June of 1975, Mr. Eddy received top honors at the Gaspar Cassado International Violoncello Competition, held in Florence, Italy. He has also won prizes In the Dealey Contest (Dallas), the Denver Symphony Guild Competition, the North Carolina Symphony Contest, and the New York Violoncello Society competition. In addition to numerous solo and chamber recitals in the eastern and midwestern U.S., he has appeared as soloist with the Dallas, Denver, and North Carolina Symphony Orchestras, the Florence

(Italy) May Festival Orchestra, the Little Orchestra Society, the Westmoreland Symphony, the New York City Municipal Concerts Orchestra, the Brevard Festival Orchestra, the Stamford Symphony, and the Jacksonville Symphony.

Mr. Eddy received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees with honors from the Manhattan School of Music, where he was a scholarship student of Bernard Greenhouse. He spent several summers as a participant in the Marlboro Music Festival and toured the U.S. frequently with the "Music From Marlboro" concert series. Mr. Eddy has spent his summers with the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival in Santa Fe, New Mexico, the Sarasota Festival in Florida, and the Bach Aria Group Festival and Institute at Stony Brook, N.Y.

Timothy Eddy is presently Professor of Cello at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. He is in residence at the Mannes College of Music as cellist of the Galimir String Quartet, and is also the solo cellist of the Bach Aria Group. He appears regularly in duo recital with pianist Gilbert Kalish and is a founding member of the Orion String Quartet with Daniel and Todd Phillips, violins, and Catherine Metz, viola. With the Orion Quartet, he has appeared in major musical centers in the U.S. and Canada and at festivals in Lockenhaus (Austria); Spoleto (Italy); Charleston, S.C.; Mondsee (Austria); and Vancouver (Canada). Mr. Eddy has recorded for Columbia Records, Angel, Vanguard, Nonesuch, C.R.I., Vox, New World, and Desto.

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH
(1685 - 1750)

1. Sonata in E flat major for Flute and Harpsichord,
BWV 1031 (10:56)
1 Allegro moderato (3:49)
2 Siciliano (2:19)
3 Allegro (4:47)

2. Sonata in E minor for Flute and Continuo,
BWV 1034 (14:46)
4 Allegro ma non tanto (3:11)
5 Allegro (2:44)
6 Andante (3:49)
7 Allegro (4:51)

3. Sonata in B minor for Flute and Harpsichord,
BWV 1030 (18:15)
8 Andante (7:49)
9 Largo e dolce (4:15)
10 Presto (1:30)
11 Allegro (4:32)

4. Sonata in E major for Flute and Continuo,
BWV 1035 (12:51)
12 Adagio ma non tanto (2:37)
13 Allegro (3:14)
14 Siciliano (3:50)
15 Allegro Assai (3:04)

5. Sonata in A major for Flute and Harpsichord,
BWV 1032 (13:41)
16 Vivace (5:15)
17 Largo e dolce (3:03)
18 Allegro (4:38)

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DDD

Samuel Baron, flute
Gerald Ranck, harpsichord ▪ Timothy Eddy, cello

Produced by John Yannelli

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