

Laura Oomens violin & viola

ONE

A Tale of Transformation

BACH
AUERBACH
YSAÏE
SHAW



ONE

A Tale of Transformation



Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

1 Adagio from Sonata I BWV 1001 * (4:45)

Lera Auerbach (1973)

2 Par.ti.ta: Adagio libero (Preludio) * (2:02)

3 Par.ti.ta: Moderato * (2:27)

Johann Sebastian Bach

4 Prelude from the 5th Cello Suite BWV 1011 ** (5:52)

Lera Auerbach

5 Par.ti.ta: Serioso * (3:14)

Johann Sebastian Bach

6 Courante from the 5th Cello Suite BWV 1011 ** (3:26)

Lera Auerbach

7 Par.ti.ta: Grave * (3:18)

8 Par.ti.ta: Allegro ossessivo * (1:04)

Eugène Ysaÿe (1858-1931)

9 Malinconia/Dies Irae from Solo Sonata No.2 * (2:35)

Johann Sebastian Bach

10 Andante from Sonata II BWV 1003 * (5:36)

11 Sarabande from the 5th Cello Suite BWV 1011 ** (2:47)

12 Fuga from Sonata III BWV 1005 * (9:22)

Eugène Ysaÿe

13 Fugato from Solo Sonata No.1 ** (4:57)

14 Amabile from Solo Sonata No.1 ** (4:57)

Johann Sebastian Bach

15 Sarabande from Partita II BWV 1004 * (4:04)

Caroline Shaw (1982)

16 "in manus tuas" for solo viola ** (6:58)

Total playing time: 67:36 min.

* violin ** viola

ONE

ONE - A Tale of Transformation

How does one listen to an *Adagio* by Bach when a contemporary composer like Auerbach seemingly replies to it? Is it still the same piece then, or is it transformed into something new?

ONE – A Tale of Transformation tells the story of a musical development, which transpires when various compositions are intuitively arranged into a new order. ONE stands for unity being born out of music, becoming ONE in the moment that it is being played. The fact that the music on this album has been composed within a timespan of more than 300 years, under diverse circumstances, by four different composers, becomes almost irrelevant in the context of connectivity. It is my personal belief that music becomes ONE in the moment. I am fond of fluidly created concert programmes that do not fit into any kind of box, but rather trigger imagination and surprise in the listener. There are transitions between old and new, classical and modern, and everything in between, always searching for the connecting factor. Every piece seems to emerge out of what came before. By moulding this album into a single storyline, one can listen to it differently in its entirety. The music is for everyone and there is space for everything to exist. Whether contemplating, drifting off, pondering on it or intently listening – everything is possible.

On this album the four composers appear to be talking one to another: As Bach opens the conversation with an *Adagio*, Ysaÿe, two centuries later, quotes Bach by writing a fugato. Yet another century later, Auerbach greets Bach with her *par.ti.ta*, and occasionally it seems as if she in turn is nodding to Ysaÿe from afar. By adding new shades and colours to her work, she magnificently mirrors our present time in all its complexity, thus shedding a different light on Bach. Shaw in turn sets her *In manus tuas* in a mood that delicately reminds us of the 16th century, based as it is on a motet by Thomas Tallis. Having grown up playing Bach's solo violin partitas, she has drawn on their structure and spirit in many of her compositions. In this piece the connection with Bach may not directly be audible, yet it is tangible when playing its elaborate arpeggios. The compositions I chose for this album are a selection

of deeply cherished music. They're captivating through their profound harmonies and colours, and hold a special place in my heart. They all have one thing in common: they invite musical freedom in expression, timing and interpretation and they all inspire me to let go of old habits, beliefs and pressures and rather search for a certain ease in approaching them.

Hence this debut album also tells my personal *Tale of Transformation*: From the "old-school"- musician that I used to be, to the free musical spirit I am today, playing the violin, the viola, and using my voice. This is a *tale of transformation* that once started with the need to be in control and now continues merely with trust: trust in the music itself and in the idea that we are essentially all ONE in the magnitude of the universe.

Laura



Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

was a German composer and musician of the late Baroque period. He is known for his prolific output across a variety of instruments and forms, including the orchestral Brandenburg Concertos, solo instrumental works such as the Cello Suites and Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin, keyboard works such as the Goldberg Variations and The Well-Tempered Clavier, organ works such as the Schübler Chorales and the Toccata and Fugue in D minor, and choral works such as the St. Matthew Passion and the Mass in B minor. He is renowned for his mastery of counterpoint, as heard in The Musical Offering and The Art of Fugue. Felix Mendelssohn precipitated the Bach Revival with a performance of the St. Matthew Passion in 1829. Ever since, Bach has been acclaimed as one of the greatest composers in the history of Western music.



Lera Auerbach (1973)

started playing the piano and composing music at four years old. Faced with the choice between becoming a composer or a concert pianist, she decided against limiting herself.

By 12, she had written her first opera, complete with her own libretto. She branched out into poetry, prose, and, eventually, visual art, including mixed media, photography, and sculpture. Rejecting the pressure to specialise and instead adopting a multifaceted artistic approach has significantly enriched her creativity and output.

Currently, her primary focuses are orchestral conducting, writing books, and creating bronze sculptures. These endeavors often intersect, as exemplified by her 6th Symphony, a musical reflection on one of her sculptures, "Silent Psalm", which was created out of broken pieces mended with Kintsugi.





Eugène-Auguste Ysaÿe (1858-1931)

was a Belgian violinist, composer, and conductor. He was regarded as "The King of the Violin", or, as his former student Nathan Milstein put it, the "Tsar".

Born in Liège, Ysaÿe began violin lessons with his father at the age of five. He would later recognise his father's teaching as the foundation of everything he knew on his instrument, despite going on to study with highly reputed masters, such as Henryk Wieniawski and Henri Vieuxtemps in Paris. These studies made him part of the Franco-Belgian school of violin playing, which dates back to the development of the modern violin bow by François Tourte. Characteristic qualities of this "École" included elegance, a full tone with a sense of drawing long bowstrokes with no jerks, precise left hand techniques, and bowing from the forearm while keeping both the wrist and upper arm quiet (as opposed to Joseph Joachim's German school of wrist bowing and Leopold Auer's Russian concept of using the whole arm). His compositions are cherished by violinists all over the world and an important part of the modern day violin repertoire.



Caroline Shaw (1982)

is an American musician who moves among roles, genres, and mediums, trying to imagine a world of sound that has never been heard before but has always existed. She often works in collaboration with others, as producer, composer, violinist, and vocalist. Shaw is the recipient of a Pulitzer Prize in Music, an honorary doctorate from Yale, four Grammys, and a Thomas J. Watson Fellowship. She has written and produced for iconic artists and ensembles across the musical spectrum.

Bach Adagio (Sonata I BWV 1001) - *violin*

According to some Baroque specialists G minor was thought “the most beautiful key”; This sonata, composed from 1703 in Weimar, combines a certain seriousness with a light hearted spirit. The opening Adagio movement appears grand at the first chord, yet continues in an intimate and subdued manner, with a narrative sense of reconciliation: accepting life for what it is. This particular movement was the first of many Bach solo works that I - aged twelve - worked on with my teacher Herman Krebbers and it has accompanied me throughout key moments in my life. It is therefore forever engraved in my heart and soul.

Auerbach Par.ti.ta - *violin*

Adagio libero, Moderato, Grave, Allegro ossessivo

“Music arises from silence, poetry from a white page, and painting from a blank canvas.” (Lera Auerbach)

Composed in 2007, Lera Auerbach's par.ti.ta is a work based on the solo sonatas by J.S. Bach in ten interconnected movements. Auerbach takes us on an emotional journey of character pieces that twist historical frameworks into a dark, fragmented and modern landscape. By adding specific sounds and techniques she decomposes some of the Baroque material and makes it reappear in a present-day light. In this composition Auerbach seems to respond to Bach's work, asking questions and replying in her own contemporary musical language. Auerbach deeply moves me with her whispering, questioning passages that seem to portray the insecurity of existence: what is important? What is truth? She clearly quotes the style of Bach, but extends the range of emotions by adding somewhat more grotesque and raw expression. To me her work suggests the challenging path of life with all its ups and downs.

Bach Prelude, Courante, Sarabande (Suite V BWV 1011) - *viola*

In the darkest one of the Six Cello Suites, the Prelude arises from the depths like an organ prelude, culminating in what appears to be a fugue. It is this multiplicity of parts and the ensuing conversation that inspired me to discover this sonata on the viola. The "scordatura" tuning (the top A string is tuned down to a G) makes for a very natural and pure sound and also eases the left hand in order to be able to play the chords more freely. The dominant of C minor is G, a tone that now resonates on two separate open strings. The Fifth Suite follows Bach's usual structure of a Prelude followed by six dances of which on this album we hear the abundant Courante and the desolate Sarabande. In the latter there are no chords or double stops at all, and the mournful melody has to provide its own root note. Nowhere in the six suites does the cello, or in this case, the viola sound lonelier than here. For me this particular movement is also a calm contemplation, exploring the pure sound of the viola and leaving plenty of space for spontaneous timing, ornamentation, and a musical language that says more than spoken words.

Ysaÿe Malinconia - Poco Lento (2nd movement from Sonata nr. 2 dedicated to Jacques Thibaud) - *violin*

Jacques Thibaud was a dear friend of Eugène Ysaÿe's and a renowned violinist. He was known for using J.S. Bach's E-major Preludio from the Partita No. 3 as a daily warm-up. Ysaÿe opened the first movement ("Obsession") with direct, recognizable quotes from this very Bach work.

The second movement, Malinconia, contrapuntally resembles the style of Bach, perhaps most of all the movements of the second sonata. It employs the siciliano rhythm, also found in Bach's first solo sonata. The violinist is required to play with a mute, to dampen the tone and volume, something fairly unusual for a solo sonata. This turns the sound into a warm whisper at times, as if to express something very intimate and loving, yet slightly painful. The Dies irae theme only appears in the final few bars of the movement, where it is played uninterrupted on top of a drone. This piece gives me the overwhelming feeling of walking into a sacred place and sensing a divine presence.

Bach Andante (Sonata 2 BWV 1003) - *violin*

The Andante from the second sonata consists of a flowing melody over a steady bass line in the manner of a baroque concerto. A third and a fourth voice enter with a melodious line to enrich the harmony and travel through different keys. To me this music portrays a continuum with a calm heartbeat that underlines a melody, like a bedtime story being told to an almost sleeping infant. After Ysaÿe's quotation of the Dies irae this movement stands for a basic trust in life.

Bach Fuga (Sonata III BWV 1005) - *violin*

A fugue full of contrapuntal tricks. Playing with the challenge of true polyphony on a single melody instrument, Bach understood perfectly well how our brain naturally makes music out of sounds. The fugue is in three voices, featuring four main expositions of a theme that later gets inverted (*al reverso*). When listening to this work one can hardly believe that there is only one violin. Bach created a masterwork where polyphony and counterpoint emerge in a beautiful and powerful way: a single violin builds an incredible edifice of living complexity. Fugues have always intrigued me: how can one bring out a melody as purely as possible without being disturbed by a technically complex chord? How can the melody still flow naturally within all this complexity? When it truly flows it is like an impressive 3D-puzzle of a beautiful mind, putting everything back into a logical order as if saying: this is it!

Ysaÿe Fugato & amabile (2nd and 3rd movement from the first Solo Sonata, dedicated to Joseph Szigeti) - *viola*

The idea of writing this set of six solo sonatas came after Ysaÿe had heard Joseph Szigeti give a stunning performance of Bach's G minor solo sonata (BWV 1001).

Following Bach's fugue with this Fugato on this album is of course no coincidence: with its innocent, Bach-like subject being put through its paces, this Fugato is a deep bow of respect to the old master.

The indications *amabile* and *scherzoso* well describe the third movement in the relative major, B flat, which copies Baroque practice. More intense figuration and virtuosic writing then swirls the dancing character before the opening tune returns.

After trying these pieces out on the viola for fun on a playful afternoon, I ended up seriously considering playing these two movements on the viola. Its lower register enriches the sound and deepens colour-contrasts. A post-Romantic writing and sometimes almost jazzy timing along with profoundly touching harmonics are what make these works so compelling and dear to me.

Bach Sarabande (from partita II BWV 1004) - *violin*

Bach's manuscript of this Partita (which concludes with the famous Giga, a piece that is often performed on its own) originates from 1720, the year in which he returned from a journey to the unexpected news that his wife, Maria Barbara, was dead and buried. Even if Bach had already composed this partita, it is not hard to imagine that the music gained a whole different meaning for him after the death of his wife. The third movement, his Sarabande, sounds to me like a mournful contemplation about a life past with many memories that now appear painful. Whatever one may or may not read into it, this piece will speak to the listener in its very own, unique way.

Shaw In manus tuas - *viola*

In manus tuas is based on a sixteenth century motet by Thomas Tallis. "While there are only a few slices of the piece that reflect exact harmonic changes in Tallis' setting, the motion (or lack of) is intended to capture the sensation of a single moment of hearing the motet in the particular and remarkable space of Christ Church in New Haven, Connecticut." (Caroline Shaw)

Using the voice as an overtone to an existing chord makes the sound more magical, as the listener might not understand rightaway what it is made of. To play and sing at the same time to me is an utterly freeing experience. When I discovered this piece, many things fell into place: the singing that finally was allowed to become part of the performance, the freedom of timing and colour, playing with different shades of sound: this is musical freedom put on paper.

The piece ends on a D-A chord, which happens to be the dominant of the very first piece on this album, the Adagio from the first solo sonata by Bach, thus completing the circle. One can sit back and forget where it begins or ends: the music is all ONE.

Laura Oomens – violinist /violist, chamber musician and coach

Born in 1978 into a Dutch family of professional musicians, Laura grew up in Germany. Aged four, she already appeared to be passionate about the violin and so her father, violinist Radboud Oomens, started teaching her. She continued her studies consecutively with Herman Krebbers (1990-1997), Uwe-Martin Haiberg (1997-2003), Stephanie Gonley (2001-2002) and David Takeno (2003-2004). In 2004 Laura concluded her studies with a Master in Music Performance at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama in London.

From 2007 to 2010 Laura was a member of the Residentie Orchestra in The Hague, in her final year as second concertmaster. Since 2012 Laura has been co-leader of the second violins at the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra, led by Gordán Nikolic. In addition Laura regularly collaborates with other orchestras and ensembles as a guest leader.

In solo and chamber music Laura plays both the violin and the viola. Since 2023 pianist Ksenia Kouzmenko and Laura Oomens regularly perform as a duo. As initiator and artistic leader of Close-Up Classics Laura organises and programmes chamber music concerts, such as the recently launched “Dorpskerkconcerten Bloemendaal”. She also initiated CONNECT! - a project designed especially to promote musical diversity and social cohesion.

Next to her stage activities Laura works as a coach for young professionals and upcoming ensembles, focusing on music-making with joy and trust. Laura also enjoys taking the stage as a public speaker in order to educate and inform a wider audience on the importance of arts and culture in society.

The violin she plays is a Joseph Gagliano from 1779, kindly lent to her by the the Netherlands Musical Instruments Foundation. The viola she plays was made by an anonymous luthier in 2010, with a bow by Daniël Ter Berg, also loaned by the same foundation.





Laura Oomens - violin and viola
Violin - Giuseppe Gagliano, Napoli 1780;
Viola - anonymous, 2010

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