



Harmonic Labyrinth

The Con Gioia Recordings

Rohan de Saram cello

Preethi de Silva harpsichord

Harmonic Labyrinth – The Con Gioia recordings

Tracks 1–16

Born in Eisenach, Germany on 21 March 1685, Johann Sebastian Bach was a descendant of a family of professional musicians dating back to the 16th century. At an early age, he presumably was taught by his father to play the violin and possibly by his uncle the harpsichord. He soon graduated to the organ, and began studying musical composition in earnest. In 1703, after a short appointment as a court musician at Weimar, he accepted the position of organist at two churches, in Arnstadt and later in Mühlhausen, before returning in 1708 to Weimar in a more senior position. In 1717 the intractable composer was dismissed from this post, but immediately welcomed as Kapellmeister at the court of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen. His final move was to Leipzig in 1723, where he died on 28 July 1750, having served as Cantor at the St Thomas School and Director of Music for the city's four churches.

It was in Cöthen that Bach composed the six solo cello suites. They possess all the harmonic and motivic invention for which he is renowned, and are among the most-recorded works in his vast oeuvre. Each suite is comprised of six movements, all of which – other than the opening preludes – are different types of baroque dance. The third suite, in joyful C major, appears deceptively simple; however, its delicate counterpoint and flowing rhythms demand a flawless technique. It has been suggested that the *Sonata in G minor for Viola da gamba and Obbligato Harpsichord*, BWV1029 is modelled on a lost concerto, and although its genesis is disputed, it does indeed possess, in its outer movements, both sonata-like and concerto-like characteristics. The precise date of its composition is not known, but it was probably written during Bach's years in Leipzig.

JS Bach had a total of twenty children from two marriages, and although several of them went on to have musical careers, none was as successful as his second son, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach.

Born on 8 March 1714, his initial training was in the law, but he abandoned this career path in 1738. He quickly obtained a post at the court of the music-loving Frederick the Great of Prussia, where his reputation – especially as a composer of keyboard music – flourished. In 1768, now firmly established as one of the foremost musicians in Europe, CPE Bach accepted the position of Cantor at the Johanneum and Director Musices at Hamburg's five main churches. Thus, he then turned his attention also towards sacred music. He died in the city on 14 December 1788.

Folia is one of the best-known and most used themes – a harmonic sequence, often with an associated melody – in European musical history, appearing in hundreds of works across several centuries by composers from Lully to Liszt. Its origin is uncertain, but by the late 17th century it had become a popular basis for virtuosic improvisation. CPE Bach's *Variations on Folies d'Espagne* illustrate this use of the theme – dating from 1778, they are less than ten minutes long, yet demonstrate a spectacular variety of techniques, placing great demands on the soloist.

Another work of startling virtuosity is Pietro Locatelli's *Il labirinto armonico*. Born on 3 September 1695 in Bergamo, Italy, Locatelli was a child prodigy who developed into one of the 18th century's most renowned violinist-composers (he was known as 'the devil of the violin'). Most of his works are written for this instrument, including *Il labirinto armonico*, which is arranged here for solo cello by Rohan de Saram. Locatelli's *Op. 3*, a collection of violin concertos called *l'arte del violino*, was published in Amsterdam in 1733, and contains some of his most astoundingly difficult music. *Il labirinto armonico* is *Caprice No. 23* from this set, and its nickname comes from the motto printed at the head of the work: *Il labirinto armonico – Facilis aditus, difficilis exitus* ('The harmonic labyrinth – easy to enter, difficult to exit'). A technical rather than a harmonic labyrinth, the piece progresses through increasingly challenging stages before culminating in a whirlwind of complex passagework and a dramatic final chord. Locatelli died in Amsterdam on 30 March 1764.

Also a violinist by training, the German composer Paul Hindemith was born in Hanau on 16 November 1895. He entered the Frankfurt Conservatory at a young age, where he also became interested in composition. His dual careers as performer and composer began to flourish in parallel, and a successful 'composition evening' in 1919, for which he programmed a selection of his own works, unleashed a wave of creative activity in which he embraced many of the modernist trends of his day. Hindemith began teaching at Berlin's Hochschule für Musik in 1927, where he established a reputation as a gifted teacher and a great composer. In 1935 he was invited to Turkey to act as a cultural advisor, before eventually emigrating to the United States five years later. He died in Frankfurt on 28 December 1963.

Hindemith's *Sonata for Solo Cello, Op. 25, No. 3* dates from 1923, during one of his first bursts of extraordinary creativity. It was written during a period in which his style was developing rapidly, as he moved away from Expressionism – characterised by music of extreme intensity – to the so-called Neue Sachlichkeit ('New Objectivity'), in which Expressionism's emphasis on subjective experience was replaced by ideals of objectivity, organised structure and pure, absolute music. The *Sonata*, which is symmetrically constructed as an arch form, reflects the transformations of this period in Hindemith's musical life.

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Tracks 17–20

Pas de deux is the second movement of the three-movement *Sonatina* composed in 1967 – my very first composition for the harpsichord. It is a portrait of two personalities with irreconcilable differences. The opening and ending are in an improvisatory style, although note values are indicated. The so-called "buff stop" of the harpsichord adds a contrasting, muted timbre to the normal plucked sound of the

instrument. In the *Sonatina*, this slow movement is followed without interruption by a virtuosic *Passacaglia* (a set of variations), which is introduced by a dramatic transformation of the final motif of the *Pas de deux*.

Study for the Left Hand was composed in 1969. This short piece was composed to discover what my left hand could do to improve its agility while alternating between manuals. At times, the left hand also plays on both manuals, in order to expand the range of the melodic-harmonic relationship.

Written in 1970 and revised in 1986, *Alankara–Tala* are Sanskrit words chosen for a descriptive purpose only and do not refer to those terms interpreted in the strict context of Indian Classical music and aesthetics. The piece is essentially a juxtaposition of melodic or vocal "ornament" (*alankara*) and rhythm (*tala*) in two separate sections. The first section is a "vocalization" within the scope of the keyboard instrument and the second section, in contrast, is based on three motives developed rhythmically, recalling the playfulness of Oriental and Indian drummers.

The unmeasured *Prelude*, from 1974, is improvisatory in style. Various configurations of the repeated note are explored here, in combination with other motifs. The opening repeated note and trill recall the early 17th century vocal trill described by Giulio Caccini (in his *Le nuove musiche*, Florence, 1602), as the *ribattuta di gola* ("beating or restriking of the throat"). The piece is based on a twelve-tone series, but not strictly adhered to throughout the composition.

While not professionally trained in the musical traditions of India or Sri Lanka (my native land), I feel that even limited exposure to this music in my youth may have rubbed off on my sub-conscious memory. All these pieces are, in some ways, a confluence of South Asian, baroque, and 20th century occidental musical practices that have inspired me.

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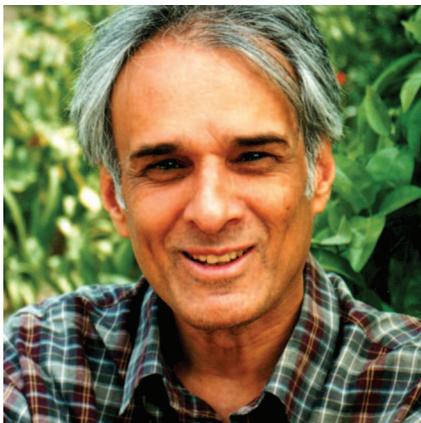


Photo © Rosie de Saram

"There are few of his generation that have such gifts"
(Pablo Casals)

*"de Saram is a cello phenomenon,
one of the greatest cellists of our time"*
(Kölnische Rundschau, Germany)

Based in London, **Rohan de Saram** was for over twenty years the cellist of the Arditti Quartet, renowned as Europe's leading champions of contemporary music for string quartet. In 2005, Rohan resumed his solo career; in order once more to perform repertoire from the baroque, classical, romantic, and contemporary periods. Although he has been more recently known as an outstanding performer of contemporary music, it was as a classical artist that Rohan de Saram earlier gained recognition. Having studied cello from the age of 11 with Gaspar Cassado in Italy in Siena and Florence, he was awarded, at the age of 17, the coveted Suggia award to study in the UK with Sir John Barbirolli and in Puerto Rico with Pablo Casals – the most renowned cellist of the 20th century. In 1957 he was invited to give his Carnegie Hall debut with the New York Philharmonic, playing Khachaturian's *Cello Concerto*.

Rohan de Saram has performed with the major orchestras of Europe, USA, Canada, Australia, and the former Soviet Union with conductors such as John Barbirolli, Adrian Boult, Zubin Mehta, Seiji Ozawa and William Steinberg, as well as with composers conducting their own works including Luciano Berio. Rohan de Saram has an impressive discography with numerous recordings on labels such as Sony, Philips, and Montaigne and his recording of the complete *Sequenzas* of Luciano Berio was rated one of *The New York Times*' "10 Best Recordings of 2006". In December 2004 he was awarded an honorary D. Litt., from the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. A year later, in December 2005 he received the Deshamanya, a national honour of Sri Lanka, awarded by its President.



Photo by David A Gautreau

"De Silva impressed us as a musician of great accomplishment and originality... Undoubtedly, the most interesting aspect of her recital was the inclusion of two of her own compositions... intriguing for their taut structures, silvery bird-like fragments of melody and rhythms... valuable additions to the harpsichord repertory"
(The Daily Telegraph, London)

Born in Sri Lanka, harpsichordist and fortepianist **Preethi de Silva** has concertized extensively in Western Europe, Britain, the USA, and Asia. She studied at the Royal Academy of

Music, London, and the Hochschule für Musik, Berlin, earning diplomas in performance and teaching and at Yale University, USA, where she earned a Doctor of Musical Arts degree. Following her studies with Ralph Kirkpatrick and Silvia Kind, she participated in workshops by harpsichordist Gustav Leonhardt and fortepianist Malcolm Bilson. She also studied composition with composers Boris Blacher, Frank Michael Beyer, Alexander Goehr and Yehudi Wyner.

Preethi de Silva is the winner of numerous awards and fellowships on both sides of the Atlantic, including the prestigious Erwin Bodky Award for early music performance and a Fulbright Senior Scholar Fellowship. Her recordings of keyboard works by JS and CPE Bach, JG Müthel and Mozart have received extraordinary critical acclaim. Founder and artistic director of Con Gioia Early Music Ensemble (www.congioia.org), she has performed as duo-partner with internationally famous musicians, including Julianne Baird, Chiara Banchini, Monica Huggett, Matthias Maute, Eduard Melkus, Wieland Kuijken and Martin Pearlman. She is the lead harpsichordist in Con Gioia's widely praised CD of Bach's concertos for one, three, and four harpsichords. It was released following Con Gioia's commemoration of the 250th anniversary of JS Bach's death, when the ensemble performed all fifteen of Bach's concertos with solo harpsichords. Her book, *Fortepiano Writings of Streicher, Dieudonné, and the Schiedmayers*, was awarded the Adèle Mellen Prize for "distinguished contributions to scholarship". As well, she has composed works for solo harpsichord, oboe and string quartet. In 2006 she received an Exceptional Achievement Award from the Sri Lanka Foundation, Los Angeles, and, in 2007 a faculty achievement award at Scripps College for completing the five-volume series of keyboard works by CPE Bach. She is professor of music emerita of Scripps College, Claremont, USA, and adjunct professor at Claremont Graduate University.

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Johann Sebastian BACH (1685–1750)
**Suite No. 3 in C Major for Solo Cello,
 BWV 1009**

- | | | |
|---|--------------------|------|
| 1 | I Prélude | 4:31 |
| 2 | II Allemande | 2:16 |
| 3 | III Courante | 1:51 |
| 4 | IV Sarabande | 4:07 |
| 5 | V Bourrée I and II | 2:47 |
| 6 | VI Gigue | 1:50 |

Carl Philipp Emanuel BACH (1714–1788)

- 7 **Variations on Folies d'Espagne, H263
 (Wq 118/9) for Harpsichord** 8:55

Pietro Antonio LOCATELLI (1695–1764)

- 8 **Caprice No. 23 in D major for Solo Violin,
 Op. 3, II Labirinto armonico** 4:02
 (transcribed for solo cello by Rohan de Saram)

JS BACH

**Sonata No. 3 in G minor for Viola da
 gamba and Harpsichord, BWV 1029**

- | | | |
|----|-------------|------|
| 9 | I Vivace | 5:50 |
| 10 | II Adagio | 5:56 |
| 11 | III Allegro | 4:09 |

Paul HINDEMITH (1895–1963)

Sonata for Solo Cello, Op. 25, No. 3

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 12 | I Lebhaft, sehr markiert:
mit festen Bogenstrichen | 1:51 |
| 13 | II Mässig schnell, gemächlich: durchweg sehr leise | 1:37 |
| 14 | III Langsam | 4:52 |
| 15 | IV Lebhaftes Viertel:
ohne jeden Ausdruck und stets pianissimo | 0:46 |
| 16 | V Mässig schnell: sehr scharf markierte Viertel | 2:25 |

Preethi DE SILVA (1942–)

Pieces for Harpsichord

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|------|
| 17 | Pas de deux (from <i>Sonatine</i>) | 3:09 |
| 18 | Study for the Left Hand | 2:15 |
| 19 | Alankāra–Tāla | 4:10 |
| 20 | Prelude | 4:04 |

Rohan de Saram cello

(cello by Eric T. Benning, Los Angeles, 2005,
 after the "Christiani" cello by Antonio Stradivari;
 on loan by kind courtesy of Mr Armen Ksajikian)

Preethi de Silva harpsichord

(harpsichord by John Phillips, Berkeley, 2001,
 after instruments by Johann Heinrich Gräbner,
 the Younger, Dresden, circa 1740)



**Performance in May 2010 at Zipper Concert Hall
 at the Colburn School, Los Angeles, California**

Photo © Clarke Henry

On 15 May 2010 Con Gioia Early Music Ensemble and the Sri Lanka Foundation, Los Angeles, presented a critically acclaimed concert in Los Angeles, which inspired the present recording.