

MARCO
POLO

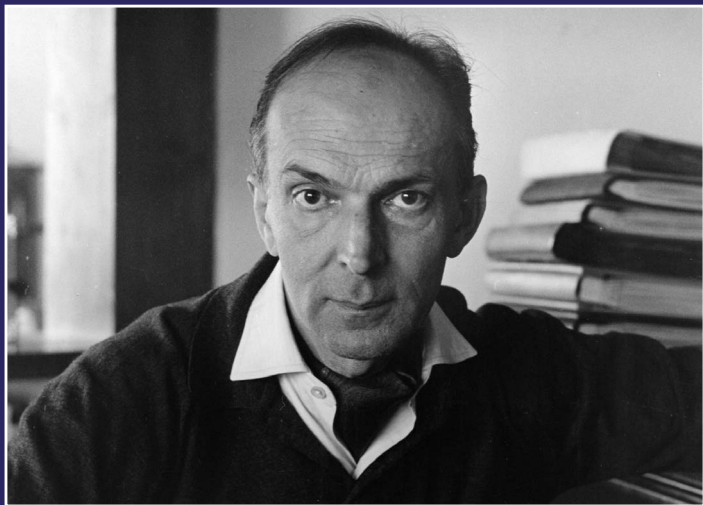
DDD

8.225120

Igor
MARKEVITCH

The Musical Offering
(Orchestral Version of J. S. Bach's Work)

Arnhem Philharmonic Orchestra
Christopher Lyndon-Gee



Igor Markevitch (1912-1983)

Complete Orchestral Music, Vol. 7: J. S. Bach: The Musical Offering

Dear M. Markevitch:

Please permit a colleague who does not have the honour of knowing you to thank you for your marvelous 'Icare'. It required some time for me to study and understand all the beauty of your score, and I think it will take many years for full appreciation to come. I want to tell you it is my conviction that the day will arrive when serious attention will be given to all you produce. You are the most striking personality in contemporary music, and I rejoice in profiting by your influence. With my respectful admiration,

Béla Bartók.

Apart from one work preserved on 78rpm discs, and a handful of radio broadcasts, the present series of recordings is the first ever made of the arrestingly original orchestral music of a composer hailed in the 1930s as one of the singular voices of his time, yet subsequently ignored - not least by himself. Thus, these discs may offer the beginnings of an opportunity to decipher the mystery that is Igor Markevitch. The sole precedent of Rossini, who retired from opera at 38 to interest himself in cuisine, but continued to write salon music and sacred works, seems hardly comparable. Markevitch's renunciation at 29 of his identity as a composer is a unique case in the history of music. To quote David Drew: "It is a silence like no other in the music of this century or before."

At first glance, the eclipse during his lifetime of Markevitch's reputation as a composer appears due, more than any other single factor, to the dimensions of his success as a conductor. What has yet to be fully explained, however, is why his life divides so dramatically and uncompromisingly into two halves - clearly a conscious decision on his part, and one whose true reasons this intensely private man seems to have sought to keep hidden. Markevitch's last original composition was written in 1941 at the age of 29, and he never again returned to the creative endeavours that had brought him such renown and adulation when barely in his twenties. The trauma of the Second World War marks a sharp dividing line during which the composer

appears to have undergone a mental, as well as physical crisis - for in 1942 Markevitch suffered a serious illness while living in Tuscany, and in a letter of the same year written during his recuperation declared that he sensed himself "dead between two lives". But this alone cannot fully explain the reasons for his abandoning composition; and his autobiography *Être et avoir été*, published in 1980, obfuscates and misleads even as it makes a show of revealing the writer's inner life.

Markevitch is in no sense a "conductor-composer", as were Furtwängler, Klemperer, Weingartner and many others between the wars. On the contrary, he emerged first as a phenomenally gifted adolescent composer exalted by his contemporaries on the basis of an astoundingly assured series of early scores, turning to conducting almost reluctantly when required by his own work. Yet, after changing course to this new career exclusively as conductor at thirty, he all but denied the existence of his own music until nearly seventy years old. When questioned in 1958 about his early life as a composer, he diffidently replied:

I would say to you, very frankly, that I am objective enough to claim that there is music which needs to be heard before mine, and for which the need is more urgent. Apart from that, if my works are good enough, they can wait; and if they cannot wait, it is pointless to play them.

The facts of his 'first life' are remarkable enough. Born in Kiev on 27th July, 1912, his family moved to Paris in 1914, before settling in Switzerland. As early as the age of thirteen he played his piano suite *Noces* to Alfred Cortot, who recommended the work to his publishers and invited the boy to study with him. In January 1929, before his seventeenth birthday, he enraptured Dyagilev with his *Sinfonietta* in F, leading in a matter of months to the young composer completing and playing his new *Piano Concerto* at Covent Garden (in concert form between *L'après-midi d'un faune* and *Renard*, at what the influential social columns of London's *Sketch* referred to as a "rehearsal party" for a select group of intelligentsia including, apparently, Virginia Woolf). Soon after, he began work on a major ballet score, *L'habit du roi* (The Emperor's New Clothes), to be choreographed by Lifar with décor by Picasso. In short, he was at seventeen launched by Dyagilev on a path that brought worldwide fame as a composer by the time he was twenty.

"I was his last discovery" were Markevitch's words in a revealing 1972 interview with John Gruen; and indeed, the manner in which Dyagilev, "the greatest agent-provocateur that ever existed", took him up must at least in part have been a journey into nostalgia for the impresario. Markevitch could hardly have entered more fully into the world of the Ballets-Russes, as he went on to marry Nijinsky's daughter Kyra, though this marriage soon degenerated. So much so that during their wartime life in Italy, Bernard Berenson rather amusingly related that Igor and Kyra used to visit him alternately, since "when they were together their artistic temperaments tended to explode". They were estranged four years into this nine-year marriage, and Markevitch soon married again, though not before he and Kyra had had a son, Vaslav (nicknamed "Funtyki"), named in honour of his grandfather.

The music of this extraordinary young man betrays no hint of immaturity: both in style and technique it is complete, utterly assured and deeply original. His *Cantata* of 1930, written on a text of Cocteau (and including music rescued from the sketches for *L'habit*

du roi), brought forth the comment from Henri Sauguet "... it bears witness to a very fine mastery, and to a marvelous balance of intelligence and esprit." This eighteen-year old, indeed, was hailed throughout Europe as perhaps the brightest hope in the musical firmament of that time. Only three years later Darius Milhaud wrote of the première of *L'envol d'Icare*: "this work ... will probably mark a date in the evolution of music" – a clear allusion to the 'éclatant' première of *Le Sacre du printemps* twenty years before.

Was this adulation more than the young composer could bear? Had Dyagilev put pressure on him, conscious or unconscious, to be the new Stravinsky, exactly thirty years on? His autobiography reveals a sense that the overnight glory which assailed him as Dyagilev's protégé caused such a break with the normal rhythms of adolescence that he felt a stranger had been born within, an alien persona that guided him beyond any of his desires. It is undoubtedly more than coincidental that at nineteen Markevitch should have turned to the Icarus myth for his first truly individual work, *L'envol d'Icare*, a score which he continued to re-work in various forms for more than a decade. Icarus, who flew too close to the sun and fell to earth, embodies a vivid image of the fate of the young composer, swept along by the frenetic Paris of the 1930s. Indeed, the most striking passage of *Icare* is the lengthy, hypnotic, ecstatic-obsessive "*Death*" that concludes the work, occupying nearly one-third of its duration.

The series of large-scale works that followed over the following brief eight years is a succession of masterpieces in constantly changing languages. *Rébus* and *Le nouvel âge* both embody a Prokofiev-like grittiness married to that motoric 'moto perpetuo' quality that so typifies the music of Albert Roussel, but in a more pointed harmonic framework, and continuing the exploration of multiple simultaneous polyrhythms that are Markevitch's trademark. The all-too-brief *Cantique d'amour* is a ravishing Ravelian essay in evocative colour, yet curiously emotionally detached. *Psauze* and the cantata-symphony *Lorenzo II Magnifico* are massive and bold. The early works

Sinfonietta, *Concerto Grosso* and *Partita* are memorable for far more than merely their youthful assurance of execution; their harmonic language explores beyond the conventional, and their polytonal and rhythmic ideas are searchingly original.

L'envol d'Icare remains the singular work among these masterpieces, whether for its ascetic, pointillistic scoring; its visionary use of quarter-tone tuning, harmonically so precisely calculated; its brilliant exploitation of complex rhythmic simultaneities; or the sheer unique sound-world that it evokes from the orchestra. Above all, for the poise and emotional charge of its hypnotic "*Death*".

The achievement of Igor Markevitch bridges important gaps in our understanding of the period between the wars. His language is aggressively individual. Not neo-classical, it has classical restraint

and a poise that is almost frigidly disciplined. In an æsthetic distant from the transmuted romanticism that propels the music of Berg and Schoenberg, he initiated an exploration of dissonance (through polytonality) that the perspective of the twenty-first century can readily identify as a fertile harmonic path. Dissatisfied with what he seems to have perceived as the indulgent prettiness of impressionism, he sought a purity and detachment of style which were rare in this interbellum period of excess.

Igor Markevitch has so recently begun to emerge from the shadows in his "first incarnation" as a composer that an outline of the major events of this early phase of his life will be illuminating; not least, because it shows him in constant, intimate contact with innumerable other, and hitherto better-known major figures of the century.

- 1912** Born in Kiev, 27th July, to the pianist Boris Markevitch (a student of Eugene d'Albert) and to Zoia Pokitonova.
- 1914** The Markevitch family flees Russia for Paris. Markevitch grows up speaking primarily French, and will eventually write his autobiography *Être et avoir été* in French in 1980.
- 1916** The family settles in La-Tour-de-Peilz (Vevey), Switzerland.
- 1921-23** Igor studies piano with his father until the latter's death in 1923.
- 1925** The thirteen-year-old Igor plays his piano suite *Noces* (Nuptials) to Alfred Cortot (himself a composer). Cortot arranges for its publication, and invites Markevitch to study with him.
- 1926-28** Studies piano with Cortot, and harmony and counterpoint with Nadia Boulanger at the École Normale de Musique in Paris.
- 1929** Markevitch completes his diplomas at the École Normale, starting his *Sinfonietta for Orchestra* as part of his qualifying work. Now sixteen, he plays the *Sinfonietta* and *Noces* to Dyagilev, who soon after commissions two new works from him: a *Piano Concerto*, which receives a concert première sandwiched between ballets at the Covent Garden season of the Ballets-Russes in July (with Markevitch himself as soloist); and *L'Habit du Roi* (The Emperor's New Clothes), a ballet with scenario by Boris Kochno and designs by Picasso. Only briefly before Dyagilev's death on 19th August, Markevitch accompanies him to Baden-Baden for the world première of Hindemith and Brecht's *Lehrstück*; and to Munich for performances of *Tristan und Isolde* and *Die Zauberflöte* conducted by Richard Strauss. With Dyagilev dead, *L'Habit du Roi* is abandoned, but some of its music is incorporated into *Cantata* with a new text specially written by Jean Cocteau.
- 1930** Roger Désormière (who conducted Markevitch in his *Piano Concerto* the previous year) presents the enormously successful première of *Cantata* in Paris on 4th June. In August, the publishing house of Schott (Mainz) accepts the *Sinfonietta*, the *Piano Concerto* and *Cantata* for publication. 8th December: world première in Paris of *Concerto Grosso*, reviewed as follows by no less than Darius Milhaud in *L'Europe* of 13th December: "Markevitch's *Concerto Grosso* was one of those great rendings of the musical skies, a door suddenly opening on the future which allows an as yet unknown climate to enter. Igor Markevitch has a formidable technique and a truly unique invention."
- 1931** Composes the *Serenade* (January - March), perhaps his most "Stravinskian" work. On 24th April, Hans Rosbaud conducts the German premières of *Concerto Grosso* and *Piano Concerto* with the orchestra of Frankfurt Radio (the latter work with the composer as soloist). The world première of *Rébus* in Paris on 15th December is hailed as a major triumph for the composer. Writing in the *New York Times* for 10th January, 1932, Henri Prunières declares: "I am in no particular hurry to proclaim the genius of even the most gifted musicians. But in the case of Markevitch, after the new work he has just given us, doubt is no longer permissible. . . . His music is not young. He is a little like Menuhin, who, when he was ten, played like a master and not like a child prodigy." Hailed by many as the "second Igor", Markevitch is now persona non grata with Stravinsky.
- 1933** After being asked by Mengelberg to conduct the Dutch première of *Rébus* with the Concertgebouw Orchestra in February, Markevitch takes conducting lessons from Pierre Monteux (who directs the remainder of this concert). At this stage, he sees conducting as a task purely in relation to his own music. The American première of *Rébus* follows in April, given by Serge Koussevitzky and the Boston

Symphony. On 26th June, Désormière conducts the tumultuous première in Paris of *L'Envol d'Icare* (The Flight of Icarus), declared by Milhaud to be "a date in the evolution of music". Le Corbusier and Cocteau, as well as many musicians of importance are among the audience.

1934 *Psaume* is greeted by a riot at its Italian première in Florence.

1934-36 Markevitch undertakes occasional conducting study with Hermann Scherchen in Switzerland; Scherchen becomes one of the principal advocates of his music.

1935 Substituting for Scherchen, Markevitch conducts the world première of his oratorio *Le Paradis perdu* (Paradise Lost) at Queen's Hall, London, on 20th December.

1936 Marries Kyra, daughter of Vaslav Nijinsky, in April. They decide to live in Corsier, Switzerland.

1937 Conducts *L'Envol d'Icare* at the Venice Biennale in September, remarking to fellow-composer Alex de Graeff: "I rejoice to hear it again, but I am nervous to conduct it for the first time . . . it is so terribly difficult." Stravinsky (whose *Jeu de Cartes* is on the same programme) is in the audience, and retreats from his earlier hostility to Markevitch, expressing admiration for the score.

1938 Contriving a commission fee as a New Year's Day gift, Piatigorsky requests a cello concerto. The world première in Warsaw on 21st January of *Le Nouvel Âge* marks a new triumph for the composer. On his way back from Poland, Markevitch visits Nijinsky for the first time in the sanatorium at Kreuzlingen; Kyra describes this meeting, and its effect on her father as "a marvel". Performed at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels in April, *Le Nouvel Âge* is acclaimed by an audience of two thousand. In response to this performance, Léon Kochnitsky writes in the May issue of *La Revue Musicale*: "It is often said that a gulf exists between contemporary composers and the masses who are avid for music. For Markevitch this gulf does not exist; in that lies true genius."

In June, Markevitch begins a collaboration with Stravinsky's one-time librettist C.F. Ramuz on *La Taille de l'Homme*, a 'concert' for soprano and ensemble designed to last an entire evening. Owing to worsening conditions in Europe, and the end of his publishing contract in Germany, he supplements his income by giving lectures, piano recitals and radio broadcasts in Switzerland and abroad.

1939 Between the outbreak in September of World War II, and Christmas, completes fifty minutes (the first, and only "half" ever finished) of *La Taille de l'Homme*.

1940 Visits Florence with Kyra, where he composes the 'vocal symphony' *Lorenzo Il Magnifico* on texts by Lorenzo himself. Markevitch has failed to comply with Swiss residency laws, and is thus technically stateless upon Mussolini's declaration of war. He therefore remains in Italy, where Kyra teaches dance.

1941-47 The Markevitchs live in a cottage provided by the art historian Bernard Berenson on his Villa I Tatti estate at Settignano. Dallapiccola is among his circle of friends. In October 1941, he completes *Variations*, *Fugue* and *Envoi on a Theme of Händel*, for solo piano, destined to be his last original composition.

1942 He falls seriously ill towards the end of a "hard, hard winter" (as he describes it to Alex de Graeff in a letter of 7th April, 1942). The composer senses himself to be "dead between two lives" during his recuperation in Fiesole; indeed, during the coming year he embarks on a serious activity as conductor, giving a number of concerts in Florence.

1943 In October, Germany invades Italy. Markevitch renounces his conducting commitments to join the Partisans, becoming a member of the Committee of Liberation of the Italian Resistance. He recomposes *L'Envol d'Icare* as *Icare*, abandoning the quarter-tones of the original work and re-orchestrating in a less "astringent" manner.

- 1944** A further serious illness.
- 1946** During a return visit to Switzerland, writes *Made in Italy*, a political study which meets with considerable success on its publication in Italy, France and Britain.
- 1947-77** Is naturalised as an Italian citizen in 1947. Following the dissolution of his first marriage, he marries Topazia Caetani. His international conducting career over this thirty-year period will take Markevitch to music directorships in Stockholm, Paris, Montreal, Madrid, Monte Carlo, Havana and Rome. He also holds conducting courses in Salzburg, Mexico, Moscow, Madrid, Monte Carlo and Weimar.
- 1978** Markevitch has effectively suppressed his music for 35 years when he receives an invitation from Hervé Thys to conduct *Icare* and *Le Paradis perdu* for the Royal Philharmonic Society in Brussels. The concert is a success, and leads to over one hundred performances of various works in fifteen countries during the following three years. In connection with the Brussels performances (which Markevitch conducts himself), David Drew, then Director of New Music at Boosey and Hawkes music publishers, London, makes contact with Markevitch. Progressively over the next few years, Drew persuades Markevitch to unearth his entire œuvre, for which Boosey and Hawkes offer a new and comprehensive publication contract. Nevertheless, the present series of recordings, commenced eighteen years later in December 1995, are the première recordings of all but a handful of works which are preserved from 1930s radio broadcasts, and a technically poor recording on 78s of *L'envol d'Icare* dating from 1938.
- 1980** Publication by Gallimard of the composer's autobiography, *Être et avoir été* (Being and Having Been). To some extent a *roman à clef*, the book reveals much even as it hides or obfuscates more. In this year, Markevitch undertakes revision of some of his 1930s compositions, in preparation for a series of performances in Brussels.
- 1983** Only a short time after his first, triumphant visit to Kiev, his city of birth, Markevitch suddenly falls ill, dying in Antibes on 7th March.

[Chronology updated and revised from material provided by David Drew and Bernard Jacobson, originally published in *Tempo*, Vol. 133/134, London, September 1980.] *Christopher Lyndon-Gee*

Regis Ius Cantio El Reliquia Canonica Arte Resoluta.

Ars Musica Scientia Est

Johann Sebastian Bach's ideal, that the perfection of Art in Music is most nearly achieved when its search for truth is at its most disciplined, approaching the nature of a scientific investigation of musical materials, fascinated Igor Markevitch, as it had challenged many minds before him. Markevitch's resolutions of the "puzzles" left behind in Bach's *Musical Offering* are among the most convincing realisations in the long tradition stretching forwards from Johann Christoph Oley in 1763, Alexander Agricola, Johann Philipp Kirnberger, Augustus Frederic Kollmann, Johann Gottfried Fischer, Joseph Klauss, Alfred Dörfell; through to Ferruccio Busoni, Anton von Webern and many others.

The origins of *Das Musikalische Opfer* are well known, but the charming, eyewitness account of Johann Nikolaus Forkel, whose biography of Bach was originally published in Leipzig in 1802, bears repetition here:

Bach's second son, Carl Philipp Emmanuel, entered the service of [the Emperor] Frederick the Great in 1740. The reputation of the all-surpassing skill of Johann Sebastian was at this time so extended, that the King often heard it mentioned and praised. This made him curious to hear so great an artist. At first he distantly hinted to the son his wish, that his father would one day come to Potsdam. But by degrees he began to ask him directly, why his father did not come? . . . The King's expressions being repeated in several of his son's letters, he at length, in 1747, prepared to make this journey, in the company of his eldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann. At this time the King had

every evening a private Concert, in which he himself generally performed some Concertos on the flute. One evening, just as he was getting his flute ready, and his musicians were assembled, an officer brought him the list of the strangers who had arrived. With his flute in his hand he ran over the list, but immediately turned to the assembled musicians, and said, with a kind of agitation, 'Gentlemen, old Bach is come'. The flute was now laid aside, . . . the King gave up his concert for this evening, and invited Bach, then already called the Old Bach, to try his fortepianos, [the king had purchased fifteen of them!] made by Silbermann, which stood in several rooms of the palace. . . . Bach was invited everywhere to try [them] and to play unprepared compositions. After he had gone on for some time, he asked the King to give him the subject for a Fugue, in order to execute it immediately without any preparation. The King admired the learned manner in which his subject was thus executed extempore; and, probably to see how far such art could be carried, expressed a wish to hear a Fugue with six Obligato parts. But, as it is not every subject that is fit for such full harmony, Bach chose one himself, and immediately executed it to the astonishment of all present in the same magnificent and learned manner as he had done that of the King. . . . After his return to Leipzig, he composed the subject, which he had received from the King, in three and six parts, added several passages in strict canon to it, and had it engraved, under the title of Musikalisches Opfer.

What is clear is that these events of 7th May, 1747, almost immediately reported in the Potsdam newspaper of 11th May, were of far more than incidental significance to the great musician, for he immediately set to work upon elaborating the “royal theme”, had the resulting set of pieces engraved and printed at his own expense, and, less than two months later, on 7th July of the same year sent it to the King with a dedicatory preface. We shall never know with precision what was the exact “theme” given by Frederick the Great to Bach for his elaboration, and to what extent Bach adapted or “improved” it, but we do know that Frederick was no mean musician – his flute teacher was no less than Joachim Quantz, and his own surviving compositions are of merit – and we may surmise from Bach’s reaction that the essence contained within the royal idea piqued his interest not a little.

There is every reason to believe that the *Ricercar a 3* represents a fairly literal, immediate writing down of the first Fugue improvised on the evening of 7th May on the King’s theme, for in the first engraving supervised by Bach, it is rendered as a keyboard work. So too, written out on two staves, is the earliest, manuscript version of the *Ricercar a 6*, though this thorough working out is unlikely to have been the same music played extempore on that evening at the palace. Indeed, Bach specifically recalls in his dedicatory remarks that he had promised the King ‘to work out this Royal theme more fully, and then make it known to the world’. It seems that on the evening in question, he asked to be allowed to play a fugue in six parts on a theme of his own choosing, taking away the complex royal theme, rich in potential for development, for later elaboration.

The great work of his last year, *The Art of Fugue*, must already have been in his mind when he visited the Emperor Frederick on that May evening three years earlier. Just as the *Kunst der Fuge* could not be complete without the inclusion of four canons in diverse configurations, so, setting to work on exploring every angle of the magnificently constructed royal *alla breve* melody, Bach saw that its contrapuntal

vindication would be most eloquently expressed in a series of canons. For, fine though the theme is, it does not allow simple canonic or stretto imitation, but requires modification. In all, therefore, he appends ten canons to the work; interposing a *Trio Sonata* for flute, violin and continuo; a perfect homage to the King’s own executant abilities.

The canons are among the most diverse and resourceful ever written, including canons by Inversion (mirror canons), one of these by Augmentation (doubling of note values); in *Epidiapente*, that is, at the fifth; and two entitled *Perpetuus*, that could hypothetically keep regenerating their material endlessly. The majority are not written out in full: the heading alone will enable a resourceful composer to realize their working out. One, indeed, is entitled *Quaerendo invenietis*, that is, ‘Seek and ye shall find’. The solution to this “puzzle” canon is singular: at the second, by inversion, at a distance of ten beats!

Bach’s inscription, on the page preceding the canons, of the famous acrostic R.I.C.E.R.C.A.R., *Regis Iussu Cantio Et Reliqua Canonica Arte Resoluta* (By the King’s Command, the Song and the Remainder Resolved by Canonic Art) is one of the most intriguing clues to the nature of the composition as a whole. Undoubtedly, Bach was an assiduous student of the music of his precursors (we know, for instance, that he studied Palestrina whilst composing the *B Minor Mass*), and did not lack for a refined appreciation of the shades of meaning attaching to appellations such as *Canzona*, *Ricercar*, and the ancient meaning of *Fuga*, all antecedents of the form he made his own, the *Fugue*. He had, however, never once used the term *Ricercar* until this late stage of his career, and it seems likely that he attached the term to the *Musical Offering* as a whole, the entire composition being a kind of “searching for” the essence of the Emperor’s theme in all possible aspects.

While the *Ricercar a 3* and the *Ricercar a 6* are masterful examples of fugue in their own right, the placing of the acrostic in the engraved score guides us to understand that the Canons, too, are an essential facet

of the search for meaning of the theme overall. In the same way, in *The Art of Fugue*, Bach will use the term *Contrapunctus*, emphasizing and elevating the contrapuntalist's art, for the fugues in which he sums up his life's work.

Without doubt, the four movements of the *Trio Sonata* for flute and violin were intended for performance ("royal" performance, indeed), and the two Ricercars are also fully realisable as keyboard compositions. The *Ricercar a 6*, very difficult for two hands, however, was subsequently published in open score, without instrumental prescription. In fact, except for the Sonata and one perpetual canon, the music of the original is not scored and has the appearance on the page of being rather theoretical, even more so perhaps than the *Kunst der Fuge*.

Thus arises the question: was the *Musical Offering* as a whole ever intended for performance as an integral composition? It is to this, more fundamental puzzle that Igor Markevitch, continuing a long tradition, has proposed a solution in the present realisation.

First, he reorders the movements, reasoning that a satisfying structure will emerge from casting the somewhat random sequence of canons into a single, continuous movement. Bach's work was originally published as 1. Two Fugues, 2. a Sonata, and 3. various Canons. Markevitch interpolates one of the two *Canons Perpetuus* (number 8) within the *Sonata*, as a fourth movement prior to the *Gigue*, since it is scored in the engraving for 'Traversa' and 'Violino'. Then, he arranges the realised versions of the remaining nine Canons into a continuous sequence, which he terms *Theme with Variations*, doubling one of them (the *Quaerendo invenietis*) in linked versions that are inversions of each other. His choices superbly create an ascending curve of tempo that yields to contrast of mood and momentum at the right moment, before building again. In relation to the first engraved version of the work, Markevitch's order results 1, 7, 3, 2, 9, 9 (inversion), 6, 4, 5, 10.

This "Variation movement" of Markevitch's invention is perhaps his most brilliant stroke in

persuading us that the *Musical Offering* functions perfectly well as a self-standing, integral concert work. What results, then, is a four-part work:

1. The *Ricercar a 3*; 2. The "Variations" (i.e. the sequence of Canons); 3. The *Sonata*, with the interpolation of one of the *Canons Perpetuus*; 4. The *Ricercar a 6* (for some reason, Markevitch entitles this *Fuga a 6*).

Second to these decisions of form, Markevitch casts the work for three orchestral groups, stereophonically disposed on stage; within the central group are the instruments that will play the *Sonata*. Orchestras one and two, to the conductor's left and right, are composed purely of strings. Orchestra three includes the continuo group, the flute who will play the *Trio Sonata*, as well as oboe, cor anglais, and bassoon. The presence of these four wind instruments provides rich opportunity for textural contrast and organ-like reinforcement of, particularly, the bass lines. Indeed, the first entry of the solo oboe, in Variation V (*Quaerendo invenietis*) is little short of shocking, and at least ear-sharpening; the cor anglais and bassoon follow in the inverted version, Variation VI.

Without a doubt, the thematic structure of the work is clarified by the resourceful use of Markevitch's stereophonically disposed forces, and by the judicious contrasts afforded by wind tone colours. Whilst aiming at clarity and separation in the sequence of Canons, in his strikingly dignified version of the great, concluding *Ricercar a 6*, he achieves instead an organ-like massiveness of tone through discreet octave doubling and superb use of the bassoon and double-bass as *pedaliter* partners, reserved until the very final entry of the theme.

Finally, Markevitch cleverly integrates the *Sonata* into the composition as a whole by engaging the strings of both orchestral groups to amplify the tonic and dominant statements of the theme in the *Allegro* second movement. This orchestral "participation" in the chamber music texture is both discreet and very satisfying. It does indeed "unify" the various components of the work in a concert situation, just as does the logical framing of the whole between the two Ricercars.

Markevitch's interest in making this version of Bach's masterpiece was aroused by his former teacher, Nadia Boulanger, to whom his work is dedicated. Indeed, Boulanger completed the keyboard continuo part, which had been assigned to Dinu Lipatti, but left incomplete at the latter's death. By today's standards, this continuo realisation is somewhat dated, rather too pianistic, but we have in this performance retained the part as it stands in Markevitch's score, since the entire composition is in some sense a document on the road towards reconstruction of a historically aware performance practice of the eighteenth century.

Markevitch's version of Bach's *Musikalisches Opfer* was written for, and first performed at the 1950 Strasbourg Bach Festival. It remained one of his favourite productions, which he recorded in 1956 in Paris with the ORTF Orchestra, and chose for his New York debut at Carnegie Hall with the Symphony of the Air in January 1957, alongside Verdi and Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps*. Even as his conducting career blossomed, in other words, he remained determined to keep his identity as a composer before the public.

Christopher Lyndon-Gee

Rémy Baudet

The violinist Rémy Baudet was born in The Hague, beginning violin lessons at the age of five. At a young age he was invited to study at the University of Groningen, moving to Amsterdam to study with Mark Lubotsky, and gaining the Prize for Outstanding Student at the Amsterdam Conservatory. In 1980 he was named co-Concertmaster of the Arnhem Philharmonic Orchestra, dividing his time between this position and his appointment by Frans Bruggen as Concertmaster of the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century, as well as many solo engagements on both Baroque and modern violin.

Hans van Loenen

Hans van Loenen was born in Heerlen, on the Dutch-German border in the province of Limburg (Maastricht). His father was a violinist, and, though this became his first instrument, his interest in wind instruments was greater. At the age of twelve he began flute lessons with the conductor Piet Stalmeyer, transferring at the age of sixteen to Professor Hermann at Aachen, where he also played in the opera orchestra. He later studied under the great Hubert Barwahser at the Maastricht Conservatory, and, joining the Arnhem Philharmonic Orchestra in 1965, has been principal flute since 1969. He has played solo concertos many times with this and other Dutch orchestras, and specialises in performance on the wooden Baroque transverse flute.

Jeroen Reuling

The cellist Jeroen Reuling began his studies with Jean Decroos, subsequently studying with André Navarra at the Conservatory of Detmold, Germany, becoming Navarra's assistant. He completed his studies in Geneva with the great French cellist Pierre Fournier. Since his début at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw as soloist with the Amsterdam Philharmonic Orchestra (now the Netherlands Philharmonic), he has played regularly with numerous Dutch orchestras, among others, under conductor Yehudi Menuhin. Since 1983 he has been first solo-cellist with the Arnhem Philharmonic Orchestra; he also plays with the Rublyov Piano Trio, and is Professor of Cello at the Conservatory at Zwolle, Netherlands. He has held master-classes in Arezzo, Florence, Budapest, Dublin, Leuven and many other cities.

Dirk Luijmes

Dirk Luijmes completed his studies in organ, harpsichord and church music under Bert Matter and Chriss Farr at the Arnhem Conservatory. He subsequently studied Musicology at the State University of Utrecht. In 1992 he was a prizewinner at the Dutch National Competition for Organ Improvisation, taking a similar prize the following year at the European Organ Improvisation Competition. In addition to his activities as soloist and chamber musician, he is in much demand as a music journalist for various publications, and programme note writer for the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the Holland Festival and Utrecht Festival of Early Music.

The Arnhem Philharmonic Orchestra (Het Gelders Orkest)

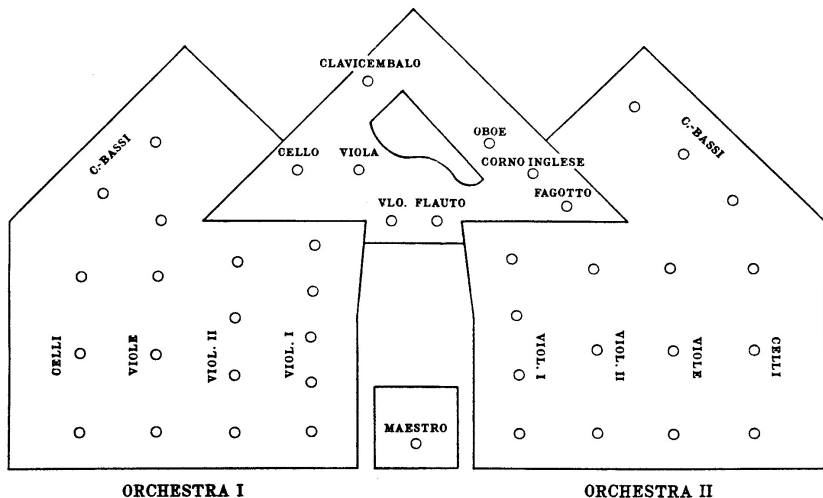
The Arnhem Philharmonic Orchestra, established in 1889, is based in Arnhem, capital city of the province of the Gelderland, Netherlands, where it is known locally as Het Gelders Orkest. The orchestra plays frequently all over The Netherlands, with an important secondary concert series at the famous hall, De Vereeniging in the roman city of Nijmegen, as well as its subscription series at its home, Musis Sacrum in Arnhem. Conductors such as Carl von Garaguly (1959-1970) and Yoav Talmi (1974-1980) played a large rôle in the artistic development of the orchestra. More recently, the leadership of conductors Guido Ajmone Marsan, Georges Octors and Elyakum Shapirra led the orchestra into the first rank of Dutch orchestras. The orchestra has gained a great deal of international as well as national attention through a growing series of tours to international festivals, broadcasting and television appearances. Roberto Benzi was chief conductor from 1989 to 1997; the orchestra is now led by German maestro Martin Sieghart. Under conductor Christopher Lyndon-Gee, they have made a strong international impact through their highly recognised and awarded CD recordings for Naxos and Marco Polo, as well as in appearances with him at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw for the Robeco Summer Concerts and Holland Festival.

Christopher Lyndon-Gee

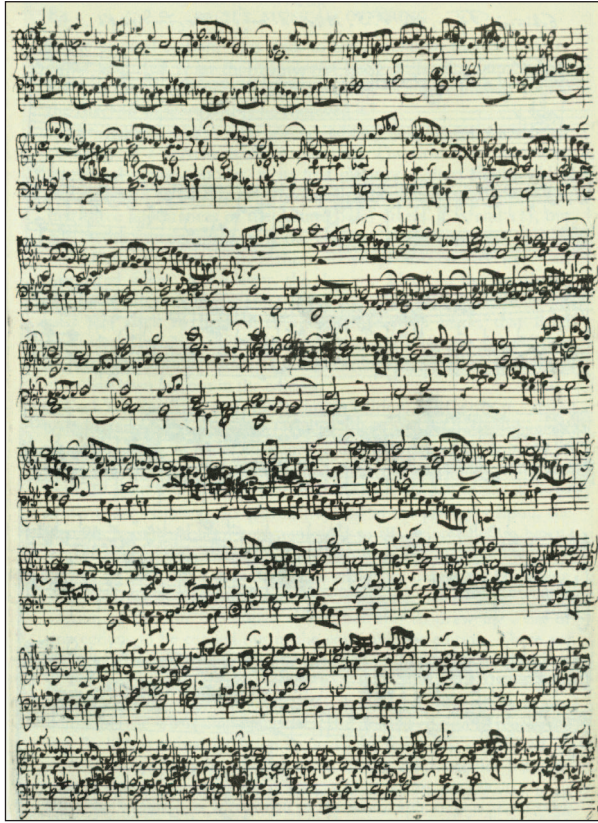
Christopher Lyndon-Gee was nominated for a GRAMMY in 1998 for Best Orchestral Performance for the groundbreaking complete works of Igor Markevitch (Marco Polo), while, in 2001-2002, recordings for Naxos of *Arcana* and other works by Varèse, with the Polish National Radio Orchestra won international acclaim. *The Gramophone*, *Penguin Guide to Compact Discs* and *Fanfare* have all recognized his work and Australian critics' organizations named him Artist of the Year and Best Opera Conductor; the latter for his conducting of the world première of Larry Sitsky's *The Golem* at Sydney Opera House. Also a widely performed composer, Lyndon-Gee was honoured as a Composer Laureate of the Onassis Foundation, Athens, in 2001, and has won the Adolf Spivakovsky Prize, the Sounds Australian Award (three times), and two MacDowell Fellowships. He is currently working on major orchestral works including *The Auschwitz Poems* and *Socrates' Death*, the latter commissioned for première at Canterbury Cathedral, in his native England, in 2004. During 2003, his setting of an ancient Greek Ode under the title *The Temple of Athena Pronaea* was given its first performance in New York, and *Sulla Teoria dei Collegamenti Cosmici*, commissioned by the violinist Peter Sheppard-Skærved, was premièred at the Odense Contemporary Music Festival, Denmark. Lyndon-Gee studied under Arthur Hutchings and Rudolf Schwartz in Great Britain, Franco Ferrara and Goffredo Petrassi in Italy, and Igor Markevitch at Monte Carlo. Hearing him conduct a student concert in Rome, Leonard Bernstein invited him to Tanglewood, where he met Bruno Maderna, becoming the latter's assistant in Milan. Erich Leinsdorf and Maurice Abravanel were also influential on his work. He enjoyed a busy early career as a pianist, specialising in contemporary repertoire, with over two hundred new works written for him. Today, his hectic freelance career includes regular visits to orchestras in Germany, Italy, England, The Netherlands, Poland, Australia, New Zealand, Russia and several other countries; he serves also as Head of the Conducting School at New York's Adelphi University, combining this with constant travel.

Disposition des Instruments

ORCHESTRA III



Markevitch's triple orchestra plan



Measures 70 - 99 of Bach's manuscript for the Ricercar a 6 of the Musical Offering



DDD

8.225120

 Playing Time
51:57


www.naxos.com

 © & © 2004 Naxos Rights International Ltd.
 Booklet notes in English
 Made in the EU

The Russian-born conductor and composer, Igor Markevitch, was one of many composers fascinated by the various puzzles in the output of J.S. Bach. In *The Musical Offering* he calls for three orchestras – to clarify the work's contrapuntal texture – and reorders the canons left incomplete by Bach, drawing them together into one continuous movement. The composition concludes with a six-part fugue whose style is at once grand yet dignified.

Igor MARKEVITCH

(1912-1983)

Complete Orchestral Music • 7

J. S. Bach: The Musical Offering (Potsdam & Leipzig, 1747)

Realized 1949-50 for three orchestral groups and solo quartet

- | | | |
|----|--|-------|
| 1 | I Ricercare a 3 Voci | 6:33 |
| | II Tema e Variazioni: | 17:11 |
| 2 | Tema | 0:32 |
| 3 | Canon a 2, Cancrizans | 1:06 |
| 4 | Canon Perpetuus super Thema Regium | 1:10 |
| 5 | Per Motum Contrarium | 0:38 |
| 6 | Canon in Unisono | 0:36 |
| 7 | Per Motum Contrarium (Quaerendo invenietis) | 0:33 |
| 8 | Per Motum Contrarium: Inversus Var. Vae | 0:31 |
| 9 | Fuga Canonica in Epidiapente | 2:19 |
| 10 | Per Augmentationem contrario motu | 2:03 |
| 11 | Canon Per Tonos | 3:20 |
| 12 | Canon Perpetuus a 4 | 4:25 |
| | III Sonata [†] | 28:13 |
| 13 | Largo | 5:06 |
| 14 | Allegro (with Orchestral interpolations) | 6:28 |
| 15 | Andante | 3:03 |
| 16 | Allegro giusto ('Canon concertante', i.e. Canon Perpetuus) | 1:05 |
| 17 | Tempo di Giga | 3:42 |
| 18 | IV Fuga (Ricercar) a 6 Voci | 8:50 |

Arnhem Philharmonic Orchestra • Christopher Lyndon-Gee

[†]Rémy Baudet, Violin • Hans van Loenen, Wooden Transverse Flute

Jeroen Reuling, Cello • Dirk Luijmes, Harpsichord

Recorded at Musis Sacrum, Arnhem from 9th-12th April 1997

Producer & Post-Production: Benno Torrenga • Engineer: Henk Middelham

Booklet Notes: Christopher Lyndon-Gee • Publisher: Boosey & Hawkes

Cover Photo: Igor Markevitch leaning on a piano (1965) (Horst Tappe/Lebrecht Collection)