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J.S. BACH

THE WELL-TEMPERED CLAVIER, BOOK 1 (BWV 846-895)

KIMIKO ISHIZAKA, PIANO

THE WELL-TEMPERED CLAVIER, BOOK 1 (BWV 846-893)

When Bach composed music, he did so within tight, self-imposed boundaries. Every interval, every voice, and every rhythm fits into a plan. Whether this means the key of the piece, the spacing of the entrances of a fugue, or the length of the notes in a given voice, each detail was conceived to fit logically and elegantly within a narrow frame. Bach made rules for himself, and he followed them.

What then, is the pianist to do when faced with the *Well-Tempered Clavier*? Bach didn't provide as many rules for the performer as he did for himself. Most notably, there are very few tempo, dynamic, or articulation markings. Bach tells you what notes to play, but not how to play them. How does one come up with an interpretation, especially when the composer places such high expectations for logic and consistency on himself? My journey went like this:

- Understand every note (in both the prelude and fugue, which are always related) in the context of the fugal theme and its counterpoint.
- Apply articulation patterns so that related material is always treated alike, and so that Bach's inexorable logic can be heard.
- Learn to move in such a way that the sound production is natural, warm, and flowing.

The goals that I set for my interpretation are quite ambitious. Each voice should be clear, independent, and consistent from start to finish. Each voice should have its own phrasing and dynamics that support its narrative. But the voices also work together; the texture and voicing should serve the larger arc of each piece, logically, and emotionally.

Bach's music, played on the piano, can achieve a speech-like clarity, with a singing voice that is unique to the instrument, but it must come from precise articulation and phrasing. The sustaining pedal doesn't help with this goal, so I don't use it.

Finally, I should mention that my practicing is done almost exclusively in total darkness so that it is impossible to see the keys of the piano, or anything at all. This helps me become the listener instead of the pianist, placing me in a sparse and isolated universe occupied completely and solely by the greatest music that I have yet known.

- *Kimiko Ishizaka*

www.kimiko-piano.com

All tracks recorded July 4-9, 2014 at Teldex Studio in Berlin, Germany

Executive Producer Robert Douglass

Associate Producer Johannes Bijpost

Session Producer, Editing, Mixing Anne-Marie Sylvestre

Session Engineer Tobias Lehmann

Mastering Anne-Marie Sylvestre at Studio 2xHD

Piano Technician Gerd Finkenstein

Instrument Bösendorfer 280 provided by Bösendorfer

Album Art Maxim Korsakov

(Thomaskirche in Leipzig where J.S. Bach was the cantor.)

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photo by An'a Osipanova

Toward *The Well-Tempered Clavier*

That *The Well-Tempered Clavier* lies on the path of every pianist is a given. The work is considered by many to be the “Old Testament” of piano repertoire. It has been claimed that you can learn everything there is to know about music by studying these pieces. For Kimiko Ishizaka, however, it wasn’t always obvious that she would create the recording you are holding in your hands today.

As recently as 2009, the year after Kimiko won medals at the national championships for Olympic weightlifting, and the year she retired from competitive sports, she also began her first serious study of Bach, starting with his *Goldberg Variations*. It wasn’t the first encounter that she’d had with the Cantor of Leipzig, after all she’d performed her first Bach Prelude – F-Minor, BWV 881 – at the age of 5. What began with the *Goldbergs* in 2009, however, was something different. It was a deep and methodical, intellectual and emotional investigation, and it would lead her to a whole new world of possibilities as a pianist.

As Kimiko’s love for the *Goldberg Variations* grew, she resolved to record it, resulting in the 2012 Open Goldberg Variations project. In order to make that recording, more than 400 fans came together to sponsor and support her passion, and the results can be heard online www.opengoldbergvariations.org

Empowered with the overwhelming success of this first Bach recording, Kimiko undertook a series of world tours performing *The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I*. These tours were a critical triumph, and enabled Kimiko to develop her interpretation of the work into a unique and finely-tuned whole. Reviewers were thrilled:

“a gifted and obviously devoted Bachian”
– James R. Oestreich, *New York Times*

“her command of structure in the fugues went beyond impressive, she was able to bring poetry to the fugues without blurring their structure. Some of the minor key fugues in particular were most glorious in their intensity” – Robert Hugill

With the momentum of five years of focused effort behind her, Kimiko again turned to her fans for backing and patronage. Over 900 people contributed to the effort on Kickstarter.com to finance this recording. In July 2014, a dream team consisting of Kimiko, Anne-Marie Sylvestre (session engineer), Gerd Finkenstein (piano technician), and a Bösendorfer 280 grand piano (hand chosen from the factory showroom in Vienna), all converged in the renowned Teldex Studio in Berlin to spend six days recording Bach’s *Preludes* and *Fugues*.

You now possess the results of this remarkable journey. When you’ve won ample time and the requisite inner space to absorb all 48 pieces, methodically organized into 12 keys, major and minor, from the “simple” C major beginning to the hauntingly aching masterpiece of the *B-minor Fugue*, we hope that you too will share a sense of accomplishment, satisfaction, and enrichment as you move down the path of knowing and cherishing *The Well-Tempered Clavier*.

– Robert Douglass, Executive Producer

Kimiko Ishizaka sincerely hopes that you will share this music with others, and teach them to love Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier. To learn more about this project and access high-quality file downloads of the recording, as well as the musical score, visit www.welltemperedclavier.org

DISC 1

- 1 PRELUDE I IN C MAJOR, BWV 846..... 2:43
- 2 FUGUE I IN C MAJOR, BWV 846..... 1:56
- 3 PRELUDE II IN C MINOR, BWV 847..... 1:47
- 4 FUGUE II IN C MINOR, BWV 847..... 1:56
- 5 PRELUDE III IN C-SHARP MAJOR, BWV 848.. 1:15
- 6 FUGUE III IN C-SHARP MAJOR, BWV 848..... 2:35
- 7 PRELUDE IV IN C-SHARP MINOR, BWV 849.... 2:58
- 8 FUGUE IV IN C-SHARP MINOR, BWV 849..... 2:41
- 9 PRELUDE V IN D MAJOR, BWV 850..... 1:33
- 10 FUGUE V IN D MAJOR, BWV 850..... 1:48
- 11 PRELUDE VI IN D MINOR, BWV 851..... 1:38
- 12 FUGUE VI IN D MINOR, BWV 851..... 2:09
- 13 PRELUDE VII IN E-FLAT, MAJOR BWV 852..... 3:34
- 14 FUGUE VII IN E-FLAT MAJOR, BWV 852..... 1:49
- 15 PRELUDE VIII IN E-FLAT MINOR, BWV 853..... 3:58
- 16 FUGUE VIII IN E-FLAT MINOR, BWV 853..... 3:55
- 17 PRELUDE IX IN E MAJOR, BWV 854..... 1:45
- 18 FUGUE IX IN E MAJOR, BWV 854..... 1:21
- 19 PRELUDE X IN E MINOR, BWV 855..... 2:01
- 20 FUGUE X IN E MINOR, BWV 855..... 1:30
- 21 PRELUDE XI IN F MAJOR, BWV 856..... 1:04
- 22 FUGUE XI IN F MAJOR, BWV 856..... 1:27
- 23 PRELUDE XII IN F MINOR, BWV 857..... 2:53
- 24 FUGUE XII IN F MINOR, BWV 857..... 3:57

DISC 2

- 1 PRELUDE XIII IN F-SHARP MAJOR, BWV 858... 1:40
- 2 FUGUE XIII IN F-SHARP MAJOR, BWV 858..... 2:06
- 3 PRELUDE XIV IN F-SHARP MINOR, BWV 859.. 1:05
- 4 FUGUE XIV IN F-SHARP MINOR, BWV 859..... 3:16
- 5 PRELUDE XV IN G MAJOR, BWV 860..... 0:55
- 6 FUGUE XV IN G MAJOR, BWV 860..... 2:36
- 7 PRELUDE XVI IN G MINOR, BWV 861..... 2:14
- 8 FUGUE XVI IN G MINOR, BWV 861..... 1:53
- 9 PRELUDE XVII IN A-FLAT MAJOR, BWV 862.. 1:33
- 10 FUGUE XVII IN A-FLAT MAJOR, BWV 862..... 2:00
- 11 PRELUDE XVIII IN G-SHARP MINOR, BWV 863.2:02
- 12 FUGUE XVIII IN G-SHARP MINOR, BWV 863... 2:17
- 13 PRELUDE XIX IN A MAJOR, BWV 864..... 1:31
- 14 FUGUE XIX IN A MAJOR, BWV 864..... 1:57
- 15 PRELUDE XX IN A MINOR, BWV 865..... 1:25
- 16 FUGUE XX IN A MINOR, BWV 865..... 4:05
- 17 PRELUDE XXI IN B-FLAT MAJOR, BWV 866... 1:19
- 18 FUGUE XXI IN B-FLAT MAJOR, BWV 866..... 1:56
- 19 PRELUDE XXII IN B-FLAT MINOR, BWV 867.... 2:28
- 20 FUGUE XXII IN B-FLAT MINOR, BWV 867..... 3:18
- 21 PRELUDE XXIII IN B MAJOR, BWV 868..... 1:00
- 22 FUGUE XXIII IN B MAJOR, BWV 868..... 1:49
- 23 PRELUDE XXIV IN B MINOR, BWV 869..... 2:28
- 24 FUGUE XXIV IN B MINOR, BWV 869..... 8:02

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