

A photograph of Anne Akiko Meyers, a violinist, standing in a garden. She is wearing a dark, strapless, floor-length gown with a large bow at the waist. She is holding a violin and bow, looking over her shoulder towards the camera. The background is a lush garden with trees and a path.

Anne Akiko Meyers

AIR

THE BACH ALBUM

English Chamber Orchestra

Steven Mercurio, conductor

01. "Air" from Orchestral Suite No. 3
in D major BWV 1068 (arr. Jeff Kryka)

Violin Concerto No. 1
in A minor BWV 1041

- 02. i Allegro moderato
- 03. ii Andante
- 04. iii Allegro assai

Violin Concerto No. 2
in E major BWV 1042

- 05. i Allegro
- 06. ii Adagio
- 07. iii Allegro assai

08. "Largo" from Concerto for Harpsichord
in F minor BWV 1056

Concerto for 2 Violins, Strings and Continuo
in D minor BWV 1043

- 09. i Vivace
- 10. ii Largo ma non tanto
- 11. iii Allegro

12. Ave Maria (Bach/Gounod) (arr. Jeff Kryka)



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ANNE AKIKO MEYERS

Anne Akiko Meyers is a violin soloist, chamber musician, and recording artist who regularly appears in the world's great concert halls. Her previous releases on eOne, entitled "Seasons...dreams" and "Smile," received universal acclaim and topped the Billboard charts.

Meyers studied with Alice and Eleonore Schoenfeld in Los Angeles and Dorothy DeLay, Masao Kawasaki and Felix Galimir at the Juilliard School in New York. She burst into national prominence at age 11, when she twice performed on *The Tonight Show* with Johnny Carson and appeared with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. The following year she made her New York Philharmonic debut with Zubin Mehta conducting.

While in her teens, Anne performed throughout the United States, Japan, Australia and Europe. At age 18, when her debut recording with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra of the Barber and Bruch violin concertos was released, she was recognized as one of the stars of her generation. At age 23, she was awarded the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant, the only artist to be the sole recipient of this annual prize.

Ms. Meyers has premiered works by composers, including Mason Bates, Jakub Ciupinski, John Corigliano, Jennifer Higdon, Wynton Marsalis, Olivier Messiaen, Gene Pritsker, Somei Satoh and Joseph Schwanter. Anne has collaborated with diverse artists such as Michael Bolton, Chris Botti, Il Divo, Wynton Marsalis and Ryuichi Sakamoto. For more information, visit AnneAkikoMeyers.com.

STEVEN MERCURIO

Steven Mercurio has been Music Director of the Spoleto Festival and Principal Conductor of the Opera Company of Philadelphia. He has conducted more than forty different operas in six languages at many of the world's leading opera houses. His symphonic appearances included the Rome Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic, Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.

Mercurio's compositions include songs, chamber works, and pieces for large orchestra. His "Mercurial Overture," debuted in a concert telecast honoring the Nobel Peace Prize winners and "For Lost Loved Ones," was given its world premiere by Zubin Mehta and the New York Philharmonic. Mercurio's recording of original music for voice and orchestra with the Prague Philharmonia, "Many Voices," is available on Sony Classical.

Mercurio is a sought-after arranger and orchestrator and has created arrangements for a wide array of artists including Andrea Bocelli, Ben Heppner, Marcello Giordani, Plácido Domingo and Sting.

Bach composed the Double Violin Concerto between 1730-1731, around the same time he wrote the famous Brandenburg Concertos. A keyboard and organ virtuoso, Bach also played the violin professionally at the Weimar court as a young man, and later in his career often performed as violinist with the ensembles he led. He played his instrument "cleanly and penetratingly," according to his son Carl Philipp Emanuel.

In writing for the violin, Bach is thought to have been influenced by earlier musicians like Johann Paul von Westhoff, a prominent Weimar violinist and favorite of Louis XIV who used techniques like double stops and bariolage to create contrapuntal textures. Vivaldi – a virtuoso violinist who wrote more than 200 violin concertos – was another major influence on Bach, who transcribed ten of his concerti. Bach used Vivaldi's concerto form, in which ritornello sections for the whole ensemble are interspersed with passages for the soloist. Bach's Double Concerto is his only surviving work for this particular instrumentation; he later arranged it as a concerto for two harpsichords.


Bach's Concerto for Two Violins, Strings and Continuo in D minor (BWV 1043), more commonly known as the Double Concerto, is a repertory favorite for many violinists. Instead of following the well-trodden path and recording it with an eminent colleague, Anne Akiko Meyers decided to perform both solo parts herself – recording the first and second violin parts separately and combining them for this album. She likens the unusual experience to playing a tennis match with herself, joking that on this occasion, she agreed with all of her "partner's" musical ideas.

Anne is the first musician to record both parts using two different violins – an idea sparked by her recent acquisition of the 1697 'ex-Molitor/Napoleon' Strad, whose sound she describes as "golden purity." Its sparkling tone is laser clean when compared to the darker timbre of the 1730 'Royal Spanish' Strad, on which she recorded the second violin part. The two instruments are so distinctive that Anne thinks she sounds like a different musician on each of them. Anne recorded the first violin part in London on the Molitor Strad. A few months later, she recorded the second violin in New York using the Spanish Strad, wearing headphones. "When I recorded in New York I remember thinking, 'Wow, I have to work to keep up with the first violinist.' Oh wait, that's me," she says, tongue in cheek.

Performing both parts allowed Anne to achieve a unified, organic vision of the Double Concerto. Before the recording, she immersed herself in a study of authentic ornamentation, tempi, and dynamics. Anne wrote on her blog, "It felt like I have been bathing my soul in Bach. I'd say it's a pretty good way to bathe as it is some of the most divine music to play." Bach wrote the Violin Concerto No. 1 in A minor, (BWV 1041) and the Violin Concerto No. 2 in E (BWV 1042) while employed at the court of Anhalt-Cöthen, where he was Court Kapellmeister and Director of the Princely Chamber Musicians. The works follow the Italian precedent of three-movement, fast-slow-fast concerti with intricate orchestral parts. Vivaldi's influence is particularly noticeable in the Rondo form of the second concerto's final movement.

Anne also wanted to include some of her other favorite Bach pieces on the disc, including the famous "Air" – performed here in an arrangement by Jeff Kryka, who is following in a long tradition of rearranging works by Bach, who was a vigorous transcriber himself. The "Air," which Anne calls "one of the most beautiful, sublime compositions ever written," is a movement of Bach's Suite No. 3 in D Major (BWV 1068), composed during the same period as the Bach Double Concerto. This piece became a staple when the German violinist August Wilhelmj arranged it for solo violin and published it in 1871, stipulating that the lovely tune should be played on the violin's G-string – hence its popular nickname "Air on the G String." Anne also counts the soulful and operatic "Largo," the second movement of the Concerto for Harpsichord in F minor (BWV 1056), as another of her favorites.

To complete the recording, she chose the Bach/Gounod "Ave Maria," in which Gounod superimposes another melody on Bach's Prelude No. 1 in C from Book 1 of the "Well Tempered Clavier." Anne notes that it's fascinating how Gounod created a duet based on one of Bach's most profound solo pieces. As a child, Anne used to perform the work frequently with her sister, Toni. It was arranged by Kryka for chamber orchestra.



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Dedicated to the great luthier, Rene Morel and my 96 year old
grandmother, Setsuko Kamata.

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