

J. S. BACH • MOZART
Violin Concertos

JASCHA HEIFETZ



1946-1953 Recordings

Jascha Heifetz

Alfred Wallenstein • Franz Waxman • Malcolm Sargent



Great Violinists • Jascha Heifetz (1900-1987)

J. S. BACH (1685-1750) • W. A. MOZART (1756-1791) • Violin Concertos

In performing a double concerto there are two equally valid philosophies. The two soloists can make a virtue of their differences, pointing up the contrasts in their styles, tones and techniques, or they can try to match as closely as two peas in a pod. Bach's *Double Concerto* has always been a favourite meeting ground for violinists who are friends or relations, and the two earliest recordings provide examples of both approaches: Fritz Kreisler and Efrem Zimbalist contrast with each other, the sisters Jelly d'Arányi and Adila Fachiri match. Other close matches are the master and pupil pairings of George Enescu with Yehudi Menuhin and Adolf Busch with Frances Magnes, the father and son duo of David and Igor Oistrakh and the husband and wife teams of Leonid Kogan and Elizaveta Gilels and Gidon Kremer and Tatiana Grindenko. Itzhak Perlman and Pinchas Zukerman are pupils of the same teacher, as were Menuhin and Christian Ferras. Of course the best way to achieve an exact match is to duet with yourself, something that became possible on record after the advent of the microphone, with its improved signal-to-noise ratio. The soprano Elisabeth Schumann had herself as partner in Offenbach's *Barcarolle* in the 1930s, and in 1946 the great violinist Jascha Heifetz recorded both parts in the Bach *Double Concerto*. This involved making two matrices, one with the original recording (orchestra and one violin part), which Heifetz listened to over headphones while recording the second part, with both the originally recorded matrix and his live playing of the second part being recorded on the second matrix. Those who have followed his lead include Kremer (his second recording dubbed 'Kremer versus Kremer' by wags) and Pavel Sporel in the Bach, Josef Suk playing both violin and viola in Mozart's *Sinfonia concertante*, Julian Bream in Dowland lute duets and Arthur Grumiaux in the violin and piano parts of two sonatas. Whether the result equals the tension of two soloists reacting to each other on the spot, only the individual listener can judge. Heifetz himself did not repeat the experiment, but chose his pupil Eric Friedman as partner when he re-recorded the Bach.

Heifetz was born in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 2nd February 1900. His father Rubín, a competent fiddler, started him on the violin when he was three before passing him on to Ilya Malkin, a pupil of Leopold Auer. At six Jascha made his debut and a year later he played the Mendelssohn *Concerto* in Kovno. To enable him to stay with his family when he entered Auer's class at the St Petersburg Conservatory in 1910, his father was enrolled too. Heifetz became Auer's favourite and made his St Petersburg debut the following year. On 28th October 1912 he played the Tchaikovsky *Concerto* in Berlin with the Philharmonic under Arthur Nikisch, who promptly invited him to Leipzig for Bruch's *Concerto in G minor* (performed on 12th February 1914). In Vienna he played the Mendelssohn under Vassily Safonov and he developed steadily through the early years of the Great War. He missed the chaos of 1917 but caused his own October Revolution that year with his historic New York debut at Carnegie Hall. In 1920 he made his London bow with two Queen's Hall concerts which were so successful that he returned the same year. In 1925 he took United States citizenship and in 1928 he married the film star Florence Vidor (that and a second union ended in divorce). During World War II he gave many concerts for the American forces. In 1947 he reintroduced himself to London with the Beethoven and Tchaikovsky *Concertos* at the Royal Albert Hall, before the Queen and an audience of more than six thousand. In 1949 he offered Londoners the Elgar *Concerto*. When he played the *Sonata* by Richard Strauss in Israel in 1953, riot police had to be called and Heifetz was attacked by a fanatic with an iron bar. In 1959 he performed for the United Nations General Assembly but in the 1960s he began to confine himself mainly to the West Coast of America; chamber music also loomed larger in his life, through the Heifetz-Piatigorsky Concerts. Having given his last concert in 1972, he grew increasingly reclusive; and he died in Los Angeles on 10th December 1987. Heifetz did some teaching but his influence was mainly disseminated through his playing and his many recordings. Although

he had a 1731 Stradivarius, his favourite fiddle was the 1742 'David' Guarnerius del Gesù.

At his best Heifetz played the concerto and sonata repertoire with a strong command of structure, coupled with minute attention to detail. He held the violin high and flat, pioneering a particularly high right elbow which helped him to exert maximum bow pressure (he favoured German rather than French bows). To speak of him in purely gymnastic terms would be to overlook the sensuous beauty of his tone – yet he was the ultimate violinistic athlete, standing with feet perfectly balanced and hands in precise co-ordination. Off the concert platform, he was a good tennis player, oarsman and swimmer. With his mordant, often caustic wit, he could be highly entertaining (his parodies of bad violin playing were published on an LP under the pseudonym 'Joseph Hague'); but he could behave like the epitome of a 'control freak' – and he was extremely litigious. He excelled in Brahms, Bruch, Glazunov, Prokofiev, Sibelius, Spohr, Vieuxtemps and Wieniawski but in the Classics was frequently criticised for taking fast tempi, especially in later years; and he seemed to introduce an element of competition into all his music-making. Of his many commissions, Walton's *Concerto* was the most successful, its central movement a showcase for his ability to polish a phrase with a miniaturist's art. His repertoire reached well into the twentieth century but he did not play the Prokofiev *First*, Berg or Bartók *Concertos* – or the Schoenberg, although it was written with him in mind. He was a fair pianist and an expert

arranger who also composed popular songs.

From the number of times Heifetz mentioned Mozart and Bach in interviews, it is clear that he regarded their music as integral to his repertoire. He first played the Bach *Double Concerto* at Loschwitz, near Dresden, where Auer had his summer school in 1912 and 1913. In those performances Toscha Seidel – a talented fellow pupil whom Heifetz soon eclipsed – was his partner; and in 1916 the two boys played the *Concerto* in Norway for the royal family. The two solo concertos were also important to Heifetz, although he recorded them only once. His playing is beautiful but shows some signs of the lack of Bach scholarship in Russian musical training. In the *Andante* of the *A minor Concerto*, for instance, he plays only three trills (to six by Bronislaw Huberman and Sigiswald Kuijken and four by Adolf Busch and Szymon Goldberg); and two of them are in places which could be considered optional, while he misses out trills in three passages which sound naked without them. Of the Mozart *Concertos*, Heifetz favoured the *D major, K218*, in which he played his own cadenzas, and the *A major, K219*. The recording of the latter reissued here is the middle one of three he made – and the least attractive, mainly owing to the cut and dried conducting of Sir Malcolm Sargent. Still, Heifetz is always Heifetz and just hearing him play Joachim's cadenzas is worth the price of admission.

Tully Potter

Great Violinists • Jascha Heifetz (1900-1987)

- BACH: Violin Concerto No. 1 in A minor, BWV 1041** **14:00**
- 1 Allegro 3:45
2 Andante 6:24
3 Allegro assai 3:51
- Jascha Heifetz, Violin**
Los Angeles Philharmonic • Alfred Wallenstein
Recorded 6th December, 1953 in Republic Pictures Studios, Hollywood
Matrices: E3-RC-3326 through 3328 • First issued on RCA Victor LM-1818
- BACH: Violin Concerto No. 2 in E major, BWV 1042** **14:58**
- 4 Allegro 7:32
5 Adagio 5:34
6 Allegro assai 2:42
- Jascha Heifetz, Violin**
Los Angeles Philharmonic • Alfred Wallenstein
Recorded 6th December, 1953 in Republic Pictures Studios, Hollywood
Matrices: E3-RC-3329 through 3331 • First issued on RCA Victor LM-1818
- BACH: Concerto for Two Violins in D minor, BWV 1043** **14:53**
- 7 Vivace 3:36
8 Largo ma non tanto 6:31
9 Allegro 4:46
- Jascha Heifetz, Violin** (Heifetz plays both solo parts)
RCA Victor Chamber Orchestra • Franz Waxman
Recorded 14th and 19th October, 1946 in Hollywood
Matrices: D6-RC-5630-1, 5631-2, 5632-1 and 5633-1A
First issued on RCA Victor 11-9648 and 11-9649 in album M-1136
- MOZART: Violin Concerto No. 5 in A major, K. 219 'Turkish'** **26:08**
- 10 Allegro aperto (Cadenza: Joseph Joachim) 9:41
11 Adagio (Cadenza: Joseph Joachim) 9:52
12 Tempo di minuetto 6:35
- Jascha Heifetz, Violin**
London Symphony Orchestra • Malcolm Sargent
Recorded 29th-30th May, 1951 in EMI Abbey Road Studio No. 1, London
Matrices: 2EA 15610-4A, 15611-2A, 15612-2A, 15613-2B, 15614-3A, 15615-2A, 15616-3C, 15617-2C
First issued on RCA Victor LM-9014

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn

Playing
Time
70:50

BACH • MOZART

Violin Concertos

Jascha Heifetz (1900-1987)

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| Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) | | |
| Violin Concerto No. 1 in A minor, BWV 1041 * | | |
| 1 | Allegro | 14:00 |
| 2 | Andante | 3:45 |
| 3 | Allegro assai | 6:24 |
| | | 3:51 |
| Violin Concerto No. 2 in E major, BWV 1042 * | | |
| 4 | Allegro | 15:48 |
| 5 | Adagio | 7:32 |
| 6 | Allegro assai | 5:34 |
| | Recorded 6th December, 1953 | 2:42 |
| | in Republic Pictures Studios, Hollywood | |
| Concerto for Two Violins in D minor, BWV 1043 ** | | |
| 7 | Vivace | 14:53 |
| 8 | Largo ma non tanto | 3:36 |
| 9 | Allegro | 6:31 |
| | Recorded 14th and 19th October, 1946 in Hollywood | 4:46 |
| Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) | | |
| Violin Concerto No. 5 in A major, K. 219 'Turkish' *** | | 26:08 |
| 10 | Allegro aperto (Cadenza: Joseph Joachim) | 9:41 |
| 11 | Adagio (Cadenza: Joseph Joachim) | 9:52 |
| 12 | Tempo di menuetto | 6:35 |
| | Recorded 29th-30th May, 1951 | |
| | in EMI Abbey Road Studio No. 1, London | |
| Jascha Heifetz, Violin (both solo parts in **) | | |
| Los Angeles Philharmonic • Alfred Wallenstein * | | |
| RCA Victor Chamber Orchestra • Franz Waxman ** | | |
| London Symphony Orchestra • Malcolm Sargent *** | | |

One of the great 20th century violinists, at his best Heifetz played the concerto and sonata repertoire with a strong command of structure, minute attention to detail and an unequalled sensuous beauty of tone. Although Heifetz regarded the music of Mozart and Bach as integral to his repertoire, his style was grounded in a Romantic sensibility that sometimes courted controversy. Of the Mozart *Concertos*, Heifetz favoured the *D major*, K218 (recorded on Naxos 8.110941) and the *A major*, K219, which is heard on this re-issue in the second of three he made. Heifetz recorded the two Bach solo concertos only once. On these and his first recording of the *Double Concerto*, Heifetz's playing (of both parts) is typically elegant and emotionally charged.

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn
Cover image: Jascha Heifetz (Private Collection)

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