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A violinistic bridge through time for Bach's Goldberg Variations

For his second studio album, #GoldbergReflections (Sony), the German violinist Niklas Liepe takes on Bach's Goldberg Variations in a version for violin and orchestra – and explores the continued resonance of this epochal masterpiece in our era with specially commissioned works by 11 contemporary composers.



15 VARIATIONS FROM THE GOLDBERG VARIATIONS BWV 988 BY JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750), ARRANGED FOR SOLO VIOLIN, STRING ORCHESTRA AND HARPSICHORD BY ANDREAS N. TARKMANN

CD 1: [1] – [12] GOLDBERG VARIATIONS ARIA, 1, 7-10, 13 AND WORKS BY RUDIN, CORBETT, TARKMANN, DIETERLE, KERSCHEK

CD 2: [1] – [19] GOLDBERG VARIATIONS 16, 19, 21, 22, 25, 29, 30 AND WORKS BY EGGERT, SUNDY, ROKAHR, KERN, KONCZ, GOURZI

ARRANGEMENTS WITH NEWLY-COMPOSED STRING ORCHESTRA ACCOMPANIMENTS ALONGSIDE COMMISSIONED WORKS. DETAILED TRACK LIST ON PAGE 3.

Niklas Liepe Violin

Nils Liepe *Harpsichord and Piano* | Anna Lewis *Viola solo* | Nikolai Schneider *Violoncello solo* | Friedrich Heinrich Kern *Verrophone*

NDR Radiophilharmonie | Jamie Phillips *Conductor*

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They are considered to be a “spiritual and musical universe, like a cathedral with complex and elaborate architecture,” or even the “ur-grammar of music”: Johann Sebastian Bach's **Goldberg Variations**, first published in 1741, which were composed and notated for two-manual harpsichord, have become a playground for the interpretative and arranging skills of subsequent generations of musicians. Numerous composers, including celebrated masters such as Josef Gabriel Rheinberger, Max Reger and Ferruccio Busoni, have engaged with this 30-part cycle of variations over the years and adapted or reflected on it in keeping with their own times or musical language. This has resulted not only in arrangements for a wide variety of instrumental combinations, but also in new compositions. A milestone in the baroque art of variation has thus become a musical nexus that transcends time. For the young German violin virtuoso Niklas Liepe, this Bach work, as heard in Glenn Gould's epochal recordings, was also “one of the most important sources of inspiration for my artistic development. And I long cherished the desire to one day be able to create and perform new Goldberg Variations for violin, in whatever form.” He has now fulfilled this desire with his **new studio album #GoldbergReflections** (Sony), which features 14 arrangements by Andreas N. Tarkmann of material from the original Bach work alongside 16 new commissioned works for solo violin and string orchestra by 11 different composers. Liepe asked the composers to “transform this music for today and to define it individually and musically so that a connection to the present time can be traced and felt.”

Niklas Liepe already provoked much attention and enthusiasm in 2019 with his début CD “The New Paganini Project”, which was part of his mission “to build musical bridges in time”. Writing about this original and contemporary take on the legendary and reputedly demonic violinist, the daily

Hannoversche Allgemeine noted that Liepe had “obviously not had to sell his soul to make it: one hears in every note that this recording is heartfelt.” The Göttingen-born Liepe is without a doubt one of the most creative figures in the young German string scene, not least because of his own “deeply-rooted desire to create new, interesting repertoire for the violin”.

Andreas N. Tarkmann, an uncontested expert in the field of arranging classical music who already played a large role in Liepe's Paganini CD (Liepe: *“He is a very important partner for me and my projects”*), contributed the structural framework of the new album with arrangements of the Aria and the variations Nos. 1, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 16, 19, 21, 22, 25, 29 and 30 that adhere quite strictly to the historical original. The altogether 16 new compositions based on or reflecting on the “Air” then complete the ultimate step in bringing the Goldberg Variations into the here and now, displaying an almost explosive musical diversity in the process. While, for Liepe, “Dialog mit Bach” (“Dialogue with Bach”) by **Rolf Rudin** “shows the endless beauty of this world that we should never lose sight of,” **Sidney Corbett** turns out an almost psychedelic association of sounds in his “Goldberg Hallucination Remix”. **Moritz Eggert's** “Goldberg spielt” (“Goldberg Plays”) highlights the serene playfulness of the very delicately-treated “Air”. **Tobias Rokhar's** “Sleepless” and **Dominik Johannes Dieterle's** piece with the equivalent German title of “Schlaflos” both refer back to the possibly spurious story of how the work originated, according to which Count Keyserling asked Bach to write pieces for his court harpsichordist Johann Gottlieb Goldberg to play to cheer him up during sleepless nights. **Wolf Kerschek** introduces the jazz element in his “Goldberg Reflections Aria” (Liepe: *“Entertaining music at its finest, I find”*), while in the “Four New Goldberg Variations” by the composer and double bass player **Daniel Sundry**, the violin even turns into a rock-pop style electric guitar. By contrast, in **Friedrich Heinrich Kern's** “A Dream”, listeners are immersed in a completely unearthly, almost meditative universe that is given an unusual and unique sound by the use of a verrophone (an instrument using tuned glass tubes). In **Stephan Koncz'** “GoldBergHain”, Latin-American rhythms, folk music and club style combine to produce a bombastic, orchestral sound. **Andreas N. Tarkmann's** “Goldberg's Last Summer” refers to the original in its instrumentation as well by including a solo piano. And Greek composer **Konstantia Gourzi** is also featured with her three-movement variation “Lullabies for Three Flowers”, which, she says, is meant to encourage “respect, empathy and care for flowers. Not to destroy nature, but admire it, to treat it with caution while becoming aware of how important and necessary it is for us, in its beauty as well.”

As with his Paganini album, Niklas Liepe has succeeded here in presenting a fascinating kaleidoscope of ingenious modern arrangements, skilful and innovative variations and diverse contemporary musical styles. The wide range of different concepts featured in the #GoldbergReflections means that the virtuoso Liepe is pushed to his technical and musical limits, making this attractive new album even more worth hearing: “I have tried to reflect the huge diversity of compositional styles and musical languages in my violin playing. While I performed the historical arrangements in keeping with historically-informed baroque performance practice, there is also romantic, virtuosic violin playing, as well as contemporary playing techniques, jazz styles, styles associated with so-called lighter music and pop music and ethereal, floating sounds from the solo violin.”

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Track list

CD 1:

- [1] J.S. Bach: Aria from "Goldberg Variations" BWV 988, arranged by Andreas N. Tarkmann
- [2] J. S. Bach: Variation I from "Goldberg Variations" BWV 988, arranged by Andreas N. Tarkmann
- [3] Rudin: Dialogue with Bach" | a Goldberg reflection
- [4] J. S. Bach: Variation 7 A tempo di Giga from "Goldberg Variations" BWV 988, arranged by Andreas N. Tarkmann
- [5] J. S. Bach: Variation 8 from "Goldberg Variations" BWV 988, arranged by Andreas N. Tarkmann
- [6] Corbett: "Goldberg Hallucination Remix"
- [7] J. S. Bach: Variation 9 Canone alla Terza from "Goldberg Variations" BWV 988, arranged by Andreas N. Tarkmann
- [8] J. S. Bach: Variation 10 Fughetta from "Goldberg Variations" BWV 988, arranged by Andreas N. Tarkmann
- [9] Tarkmann: „Goldberg's Last Summer“
- [10] J. S. Bach: Variation 13 from "Goldberg Variations" BWV 988, arranged by Andreas N. Tarkmann
- [11] Dieterle: „Sleepless“ after J. S. Bach
- [12] Kerschek: „Goldberg Reflections Aria“

CD 2:

- [1] J. S. Bach: Variation 16 Overture from "Goldberg Variations" BWV 988, arranged by Andreas N. Tarkmann
- [2] Eggert: Four Variations from „Goldberg Spielt“
- [3] J. S. Bach: Variation 12 from "Goldberg Variations" BWV 988, arranged by Andreas N. Tarkmann
Sundy: New Goldberg Variations
- [4] Heaven or Hell
- [5] The Elements
- [6] The Moocher
- [7] Metal Quodlibet
- [8] J. S. Bach: Variation 21 Canone alla Settima from "Goldberg Variations" BWV 988, arranged by Andreas N. Tarkmann
- [9] J. S. Bach: Variation 22 Alla breve from "Goldberg Variations" BWV 988, arranged by Andreas N. Tarkmann
- [10] Rokahr: „Sleepless (Goldberg goes crazy)“
- [11] J. S. Bach: Variation 25 Adagio from "Goldberg Variations" BWV 988, arranged by Andreas N. Tarkmann
- [12] Kern: „Reflections on a Dream“
- [13] J. S. Bach: Variation 29 Allegro from "Goldberg Variations" BWV 988, arranged by Andreas N. Tarkmann
- [14] J. S. Bach: Variation 30 Quodlibet from "Goldberg Variations" BWV 988, arranged by Andreas N. Tarkmann
- [15] Koncz: „GoldBergHain“ (Quodlibet on "Kraut und Rüben haben mich vertrieben)
- [16] J. S. Bach: Aria from "Goldberg Variations" BWV 988, arranged by Andreas N. Tarkmann
Gourzi: Lullabies for three flowers
- [17] A lullaby for a rose
- [18] A lullaby for a wind flower
- [19] A lullaby for a jasmine