

Johann S Bach

The Arioso



In her ongoing quest to fill our classical repertoire with timeless nuggets **Bridget Mermikides** arranges and transcribes another great Bach piece for your delectation.

ABILITY RATING

● ● ● ● ● Moderate/Advanced

INFO	WILL IMPROVE YOUR
KEY: D	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Melody and bass separation
TEMPO: 80 bpm	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Baroque repertoire
CD: TRACKS 27-28	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rest stroke and free stroke

THIS MONTH WE are looking at a solo classical guitar arrangement of a wonderful piece of music by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) who, despite not receiving significant appreciation in his lifetime, is now almost universally considered one of the greatest composers of all time. Bach's enormous body of masterpieces has been hugely praised and adored by countless music-lovers and musicians through the ages. His incredible control of counterpoint (multiple simultaneous melodies) and complex harmony, coupled with the ability to express deeply the gamut of human emotions, has had a huge influence on the development of Western classical music and continues to inspire composers in almost any musical style

TECHNIQUE FOCUS

Posture

When playing classical guitar, posture is super important in order for both hands to work efficiently. The traditional method is to sit up straight on the front edge of an upright chair and raise the left knee (right-handed players) by using a footstool. The guitar sits on the left thigh and the head of the guitar tilts upwards. For long hours of playing, many people prefer to have both feet on the floor keeping the pelvis level and good alternatives to the footstool are the Dynarette guitar cushion. The Gitano guitar rest and the ErgoPlay guitar support.

including modernism, metal, jazz, pop, electronica, tango and everything in between.

This month I've made an arrangement of the sinfonia - also known as The Arioso - of his Cantata BWV156. Written in 1729 during his slavishly demanding teaching and composing position in Leipzig, this stunning instrumental theme acts as an opening first movement to a set of vocal pieces written in the cantata form (literally a vocal performance accompanied by instrumentation). Listening to the entire work and then learning that Johann Sebastian wrote over 200 other cantatas (among hundreds of other works) gives you an idea of his incredible - some would say unfathomable - productivity.


The Arioso itself is not only well loved as a short piece in its own right, but Bach himself reused the theme as the middle movement in his Harpsichord Concerto in F minor (also played as the 'reconstructed' Violin Concerto in G minor) and also in the middle movement of his Oboe Concerto in F major.

This is an indication of the portability of Bach's sublime music between instruments, and it is no surprise that the Arioso is now

“JS Bach would almost certainly have approved of us transposing his work for another instrument and amending it to suit the guitar's requirements.”

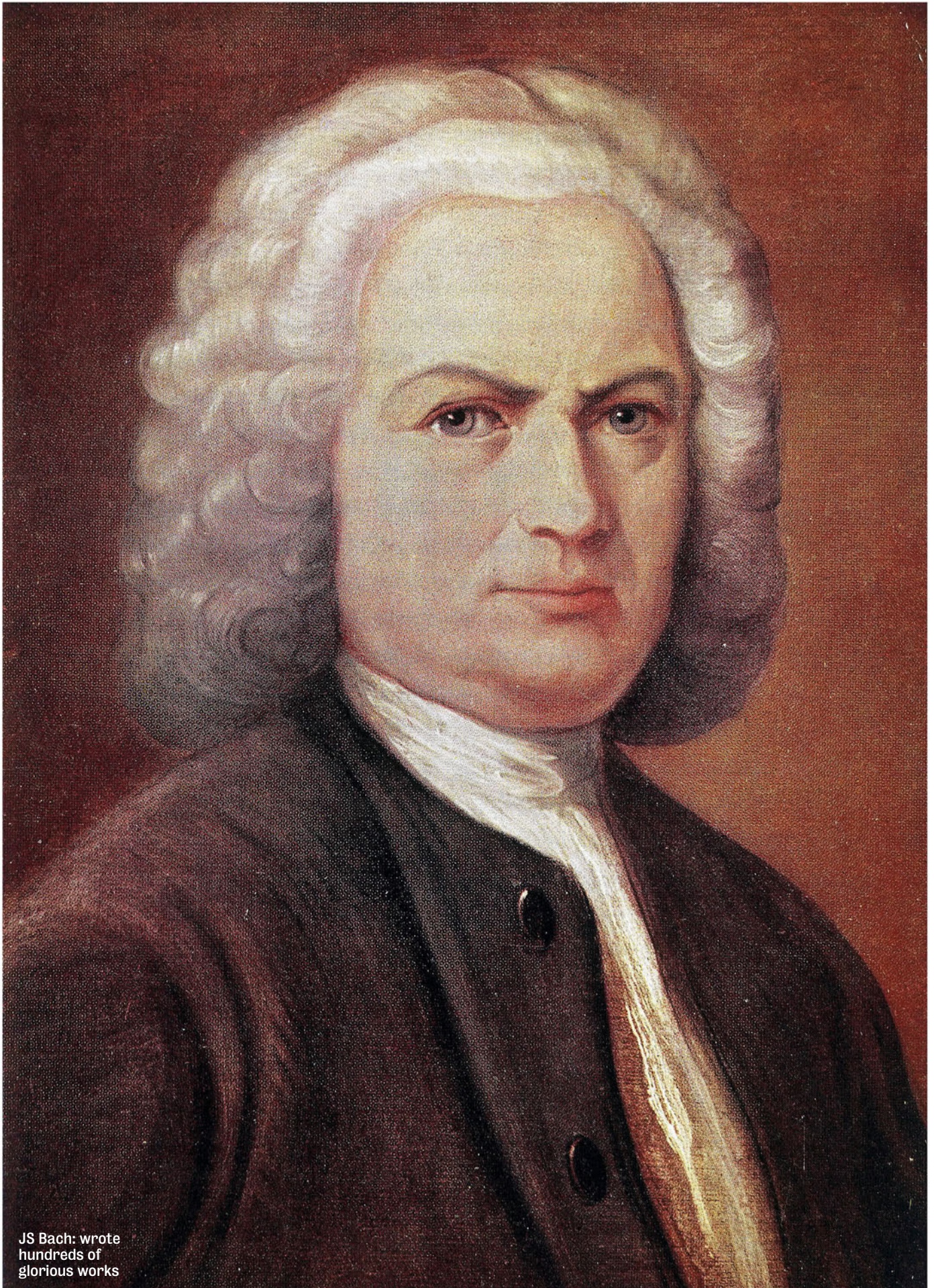
performed so effectively on a range of instruments and within various ensembles – you can even hear strains of it in Carly Simon's award-winning pop song Let The River Run, that she wrote for the 1988 film Working Girl. It also helps us feel comfortable in the knowledge that JS Bach himself would almost certainly have approved of what we are doing here today - transposing his work for another instrument and amending it to suit that instrument's musical vagaries and technical requirements.

So, with that in mind, to make the piece more idiomatic on solo classical guitar I've transposed the original key of F major down to D and added a drop D tuning. This introduces a typically guitaristic resonance, which is also rather lovely and lends the piece breadth and, of course, depth. I've embellished the repeat of the melody with some Baroque ornamentation, as is perfectly appropriate to the style and is often used in instrumental reworkings of the Arioso.

If you've not encountered a 'cross-string trill' before, the tab captions will explain how to execute them, as well as guide you through some of the piece's trickier sections. Performing The Arioso with the 'simplicity' it demands is not easy at all, but you - and hopefully your listeners - are unlikely to tire of this beautiful work, so all the practice will hopefully be worthwhile. 



TRACK RECORD To hear The Arioso in three of its countless incarnations, try the 1998 Teldec recording of the Bach Cantatas 154-157 under Nikolaus Harnoncourt; Edwin Fischer's exquisite vintage recording of the Keyboard Concerto in F minor (Bach Concertos EMI 1989); and Alexei Ogrintchouk and the Swedish Chamber Orchestra's Bach's Oboe Concerto in D minor (Bach: Oboe Concertos 2010 BIS).



JS Bach: wrote hundreds of glorious works

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 28

[Bars 1-10] Follow the fingering carefully in bar 2 and listen to the audio to hear the timing on the cross-string trill in beat 4. Plucking hand fingering is indicated beneath the tab to show how this trill is played. Slow practice is necessary until it becomes a 'reflex' movement - and to find out which

fingering works best for you. This trill is optional and if it proves too difficult, no one will miss it! Follow the fingering guides as the piece becomes a little stretchy - the first half of bar 4, and bar 10 for example. Practice slowly and commit to memory as this makes it so much easier to focus on your hands.

Dropped D tuning

Bar 1: D, A/C#

Bar 2: Bm, G/B

Bar 3: A, tr

Bar 4: D, Bm, Bm/A

Bar 5: E/G, A

Bar 6: D/F#, E/G#

Bar 7: A, E7/D, A/C#

Bar 8: Bm/D, Bm, E7

Bar 9: A, A/G F#dim, B7/D#

Bar 10: Am, B7

Bar 11: Em, Em7/D

Bar 12: Em7/D, C

Bar 13: B7/F#, Em/B

Bar 14: B

Fingering: 1 2 3 4 5

Plucking hand fingering: 1 2 3 4 5

Trill: tr

Amplitude: amp i p m

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 28

[Bar 11 to end] On bar 11, beat 4 use a half barre and continue to use it into the next bar for a beat and a half. Work slowly and carefully through the next few bars. On bar 15 the main melody returns but this time with

some simple embellishment (Baroque style ornamentation) - do refer to the recording to hear how these fit in rhythmically. I hope you enjoy learning this lovely piece of music!

Em A/C# D D/C G/B D/A D7

E B G D A D

11

G D/F# A/E D A/C# A7/C# A A7/C# D G/B G

E B G D A D

13

D/A A7/G A D A/C# Bm G/B

E B G D A D

15

A D D7/F# D G A/E Bdim/G# A G A A7 D

E B G D A D

17

amip m