audite

Johann Sebastian **BACH**

Sei Solo á Violino

senza Basso accompagnato

Christoph Schickedanz

audite

Sonata No. 1 in G minor, BWV 1001

I. Adagio *3:43*
II. Fuga. Allegro *4:35*
III. Siciliana *2:41*
IV. Presto *3:14*

Partita No. 1 in B minor, BWV 1002

I. Allemanda *5:09* –
Double *2:39*
II. Corrente *3:09* –
Double. Presto *2:59*
III. Sarabande *3:30* –
Double *2:34*
IV. Tempo di Borea *2:55* –
Double *2:59*

Sonata No. 2 in A minor, BWV 1003

I. Grave *4:25*
II. Fuga *7:22*
III. Andante *4:23*
IV. Allegro *5:56*

Partita No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1004

I. Allemanda *4:59*
II. Corrente *2:33*
III. Sarabanda *3:46*
IV. Giga *3:42*
V. Ciaccona *12:55*

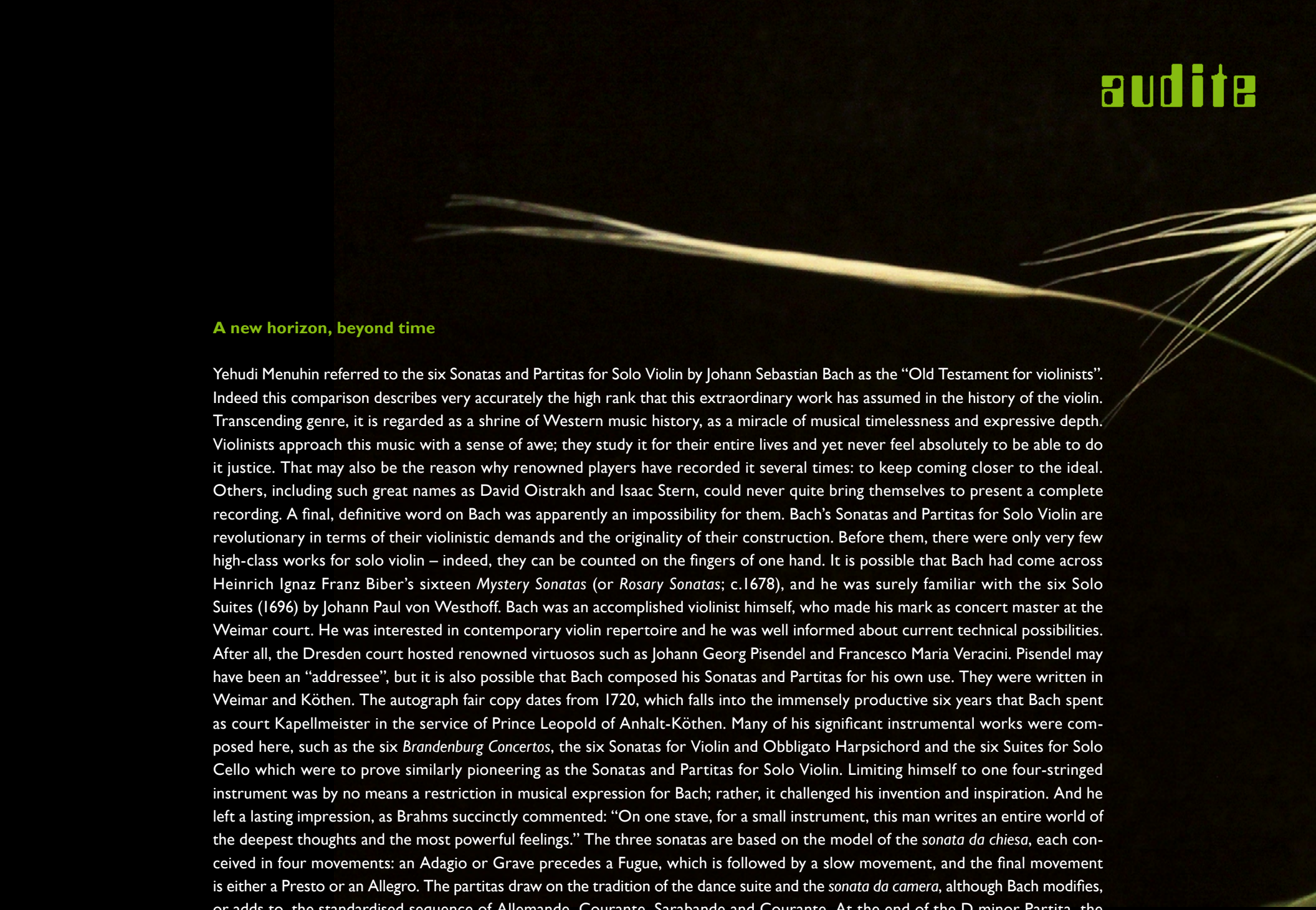
Sonata No. 3 in C major, BWV 1005

I. Adagio *3:43*
II. Fuga *9:40*
III. Largo *2:46*
IV. Allegro assai *5:09*

Partita No. 3 in E major, BWV 1006

I. Preludio *3:26*
II. Loure *3:39*
III. Gavotte en Rondeau *2:39*
IV. Menuet I *1:50*
V. Menuet II *1:42*
VI. Bourée *1:28*
VII. Gigue *1:53*


audite



audite

A new horizon, beyond time

Yehudi Menuhin referred to the six Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin by Johann Sebastian Bach as the "Old Testament for violinists". Indeed this comparison describes very accurately the high rank that this extraordinary work has assumed in the history of the violin. Transcending genre, it is regarded as a shrine of Western music history, as a miracle of musical timelessness and expressive depth. Violinists approach this music with a sense of awe; they study it for their entire lives and yet never feel absolutely to be able to do it justice. That may also be the reason why renowned players have recorded it several times: to keep coming closer to the ideal. Others, including such great names as David Oistrakh and Isaac Stern, could never quite bring themselves to present a complete recording. A final, definitive word on Bach was apparently an impossibility for them. Bach's Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin are revolutionary in terms of their violinistic demands and the originality of their construction. Before them, there were only very few high-class works for solo violin – indeed, they can be counted on the fingers of one hand. It is possible that Bach had come across Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber's sixteen *Mystery Sonatas* (or *Rosary Sonatas*; c.1678), and he was surely familiar with the six Solo Suites (1696) by Johann Paul von Westhoff. Bach was an accomplished violinist himself, who made his mark as concert master at the Weimar court. He was interested in contemporary violin repertoire and he was well informed about current technical possibilities. After all, the Dresden court hosted renowned virtuosos such as Johann Georg Pisendel and Francesco Maria Veracini. Pisendel may have been an "addressee", but it is also possible that Bach composed his Sonatas and Partitas for his own use. They were written in Weimar and Köthen. The autograph fair copy dates from 1720, which falls into the immensely productive six years that Bach spent as court Kapellmeister in the service of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen. Many of his significant instrumental works were composed here, such as the six *Brandenburg Concertos*, the six Sonatas for Violin and Obbligato Harpsichord and the six Suites for Solo Cello which were to prove similarly pioneering as the Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin. Limiting himself to one four-stringed instrument was by no means a restriction in musical expression for Bach; rather, it challenged his invention and inspiration. And he left a lasting impression, as Brahms succinctly commented: "On one stave, for a small instrument, this man writes an entire world of the deepest thoughts and the most powerful feelings." The three sonatas are based on the model of the *sonata da chiesa*, each conceived in four movements: an Adagio or Grave precedes a Fugue, which is followed by a slow movement, and the final movement is either a Presto or an Allegro. The partitas draw on the tradition of the dance suite and the *sonata da camera*, although Bach modifies, or adds to, the standardised sequence of Allemande, Courante, Sarabande and Courante. At the end of the D minor Partita, the expansive Chaconne stands like a monolith, a set of variations on a recurring descending bass line. This core idea develops into a

fascinating cosmos. This monumental movement, in which Bach carries his use of polyphony to extremes, is often also performed separately. For the violinist, it presents the ultimate challenge, instrumentally as well as interpretationally. The music is, at the same time, a mystery before which each player and listener bows. "The Chaconne, to me, is one of the most wonderful and unfathomable pieces of music", Johannes Brahms stated, full of reverence. Even if one does not grasp the constructional aspect, the great masterpiece still becomes perceptible. It manages to convince people who have never heard anything about structure. The history of reception of the Sonatas and Partitas proceeded slowly: it took some time until interpreters and audiences understood what Bach had set to music. Ferdinand David was the first violinist to take a particular interest in these works, published in 1802. In 1843 he issued his own edition, complete with fingerings and bowings, which he had produced not so much for public performances but more as study material for his violin classes at the Leipzig Conservatoire. Some years previously, David had already played the Chaconne in a concert and given the Prelude of the E major Partita as an encore. Not on his own, but with Felix Mendelssohn at the piano, who, in true romantic spirit, had written a piano accompaniment for the Sonatas and Partitas; Robert Schumann was to do the same a little later. It took a long time until Bach's Sonatas and Partitas were firmly established in the violin repertoire, until they progressed from the status of "studies" to omnipresent music on the concert platform, as they are today. Joseph Joachim, a key figure in violin performance in the nineteenth century, played a crucial role in this. After Ferdinand David, further famous violinists published their own editions of the Sonatas and Partitas: Josef Hellmesberger, Arnold Rosé, Joseph Joachim, Leopold Auer, Adolf Busch, Carl Flesch, Ivan Galamian, Henryk Szeryng and Wolfgang Schneiderhan. Joachim's edition appeared in 1908. Before that, he, aged already 72, had presented the first recording: the Adagio from the first Sonata, BWV 1001, and the Bourée from the third Partita, recorded in Berlin in 1903. Shortly afterwards, Pablo de Sarasate recorded the Prelude of the E major Partita, BWV 1006, in Paris. Joachim and Sarasate therefore marked the very beginning of the recording history of Bach's Sonatas and Partitas, opening the door to a world of undreamed-of interpretational diversity. The first complete recording was made by the young Yehudi Menuhin between 1934 and 1936 for His Master's Voice in Paris and London. There followed a series of legendary recordings made by such renowned artists as Joseph Szigeti, Nathan Milstein, Henryk Szeryng and Arthur Grumiaux, shaping Bach perception for many years. These recordings with violinists who were still rooted in a "romantic" sound ideal were eventually confronted by the perspective of the Early Music proponents who approached Bach in a "historically informed" manner, using original instruments or copies of such instruments. The recording made by the Belgian baroque violinist Sigiswald Kuijken in 1981 was nothing less than revolutionary. Playing a gut-strung, lower pitched baroque violin, opting against vibrato but instead for distinctive articulation and language-like musical rhetoric, he defined a new expressive scope for Bach. This gave wings to the movement, the number of "historically

informed" recordings rising steadily. As with probably every violinist, Christoph Schickedanz harboured the desire, after many years of playing the Sonatas and Partitas, of recording a version according to his own artistic standards. His view of Bach was formed by practical experience and an open ear for new trends. "When I was trained, Nikolaus Harnoncourt was on everyone's lips: his concept really brought about a new way of thinking. Whether one liked his approach or not, it was clear to us that something was happening. We had still grown up with the Bach playing of Henryk Szeryng. With all due respect to the old generation, I can no longer envisage Bach played like that, especially the dance movements. According to all sources available to us, they cannot have been intended in this way, with these stamping rhythms. Without planning to, we moved away from this approach. It was a process that also took place unwittingly." Christoph Schickedanz has of course consulted the 1720 autograph score; he plays a violin by Giovanni Antonio Marchi (Bologna, 1780) and uses a French bow made by a member of the Peccatte school. The pitch is A=440 Hz. And he takes a clear view: "Musical intelligence is not dependent on instruments: they are secondary. Bach himself transcribed. It is simply about the musical substance. The violin is only a medium for which this music was conceived, but there is absolutely no need for it to be played on certain instruments in order to achieve a 'correct' interpretation. I am not at all dogmatic in this. I also play with vibrato, but its use is carefully calculated. These are all approximate values, we can exclude certain things, but music is experienced in the moment in which it is played. Of course one has to gather all information and go back to the sources which luckily are available to us today. We have a responsibility there. But then one should forget everything and just play intuitively. It is not about scientific correctness: such a thing cannot exist. One has to strive for objectivity, but I don't make music to be 'right'." Interpreting Bach's Sonatas and Partitas remains a perennial challenge for violinists, indeed a life task, with which they inevitably grow. Where are the main difficulties, technically and musically? "One has to think from the perspective of the music, and, as a violinist, must not accept that something is hard", according to Christoph Schickedanz. "A fast dance movement is therefore fast. And it is to be played in that spirit: one should not make any compromises. The same goes for the fugues. Here it is important to present the polyphony in a metrically and rhythmically clear and stringent manner, as though it were an orchestral piece. One must not lose tempo just because there are chords which are tricky to execute. Musically, one simply has to find one's stance. One has to be convinced how it needs to sound."

Norbert Hornig
Translation: *Viola Scheffel*

audite

CHRISTOPH SCHICKEDANZ

Christoph Schickedanz began his multifaceted career as a soloist and chamber musician following several awards at competitions in Europe and the USA. He has given concerts, played at festivals and held masterclasses across Europe, in Asia as well as in Central and North America.

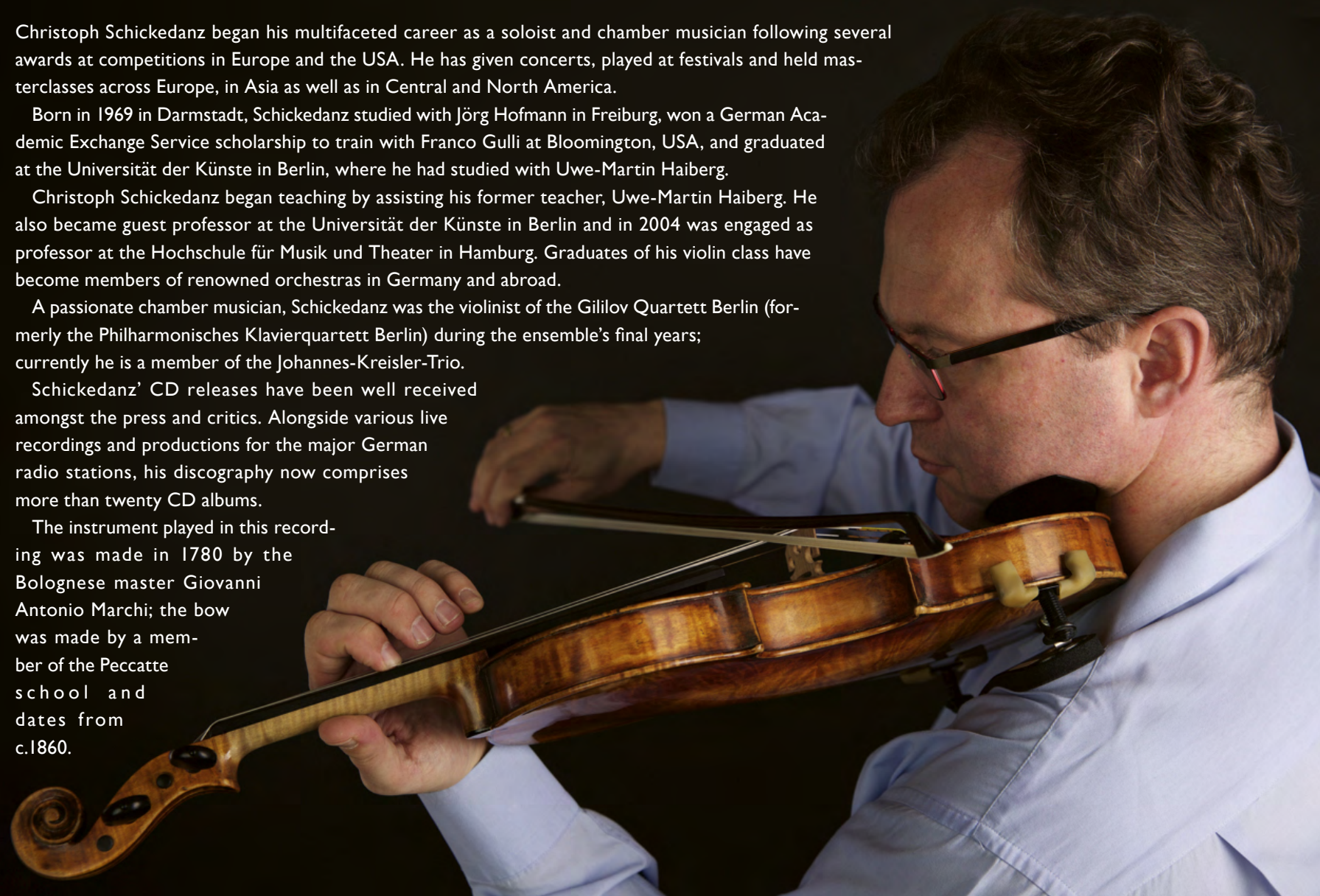
Born in 1969 in Darmstadt, Schickedanz studied with Jörg Hofmann in Freiburg, won a German Academic Exchange Service scholarship to train with Franco Gulli at Bloomington, USA, and graduated at the Universität der Künste in Berlin, where he had studied with Uwe-Martin Haiberg.

Christoph Schickedanz began teaching by assisting his former teacher, Uwe-Martin Haiberg. He also became guest professor at the Universität der Künste in Berlin and in 2004 was engaged as professor at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Hamburg. Graduates of his violin class have become members of renowned orchestras in Germany and abroad.

A passionate chamber musician, Schickedanz was the violinist of the Gililov Quartett Berlin (formerly the Philharmonisches Klavierquartett Berlin) during the ensemble's final years; currently he is a member of the Johannes-Kreisler-Trio.

Schickedanz' CD releases have been well received amongst the press and critics. Alongside various live recordings and productions for the major German radio stations, his discography now comprises more than twenty CD albums.

The instrument played in this recording was made in 1780 by the Bolognese master Giovanni Antonio Marchi; the bow was made by a member of the Peccatte school and dates from c.1860.



audite

recording:
17.-19.3.2014, 14.+15.5.2015, 26.+ 27.7.2016
recording location:
Studio P4 Saal 3, Funkhaus Nalepastraße Berlin
recording producer:
Dipl.-Tonmeister Thorsten Weigelt
executive producer:
Dipl.-Tonmeister Ludger Böckenhoff
photos:
Anna Mieskes-Petrenko
art direction and design:
AB•Design, Detmold

audite

e-mail: info@audite.de


audite