

# J.S. BACH

## — Chaconne in D minor —

from

Partita No. 2 BWV 1004

for

MARIMBA

*Edited by*

Mika Stoltzman

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**MUSIC**

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**Special Thanks to**

*Yehudi Wyner  
Steven Epstein  
Richard Stoltzman  
Douglas DeMorrow (Mika's marimba maker)  
Bruce Salyers (Mika's mallet maker)  
Lauren Keiser  
AVIE Record (UK)  
Koji Yagi*



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Preparations for this transcription began in November of 2017. As I neared the end of my work, I happened to be a page-turner for Peter Serkin's Bach performance; an assignment demanding that I listen very closely to his playing. The aura that Peter created made me feel that he and the music were one as it flowed out of him. His phrasing, articulation, clarity, dynamics and delicacy of each note played moved and inspired me. I wondered how I might reach those heights on marimba. With that in mind, I focused on practicing the *Chaconne* until the recording session scheduled for the end of February. No gigs or concerts booked, and I even stayed away from Facebook! I practiced for hours each day, recording my playing and checking it for corrections and adjustments hundreds of times. I referenced all the great violin recordings available for interpretation, and even checked out arrangements for piano, guitar and string quartet. I asked myself, "What if Bach were alive now and wrote this piece for marimba?" After thorough analysis of the music to determine the most appropriate method of playing on my instrument, and some advice from my husband Richard and a composer neighbor, Yehudi Wyner, I felt that I was ready. And so, on February 28, 2018, at the Recital Hall of the Performing Arts Center in Purchase, New York, with Steven Epstein producing, my rendition of the Bach *Chaconne* on solo marimba was successfully recorded.


## Performance Notes

A Bach study reads that Bach returned home one day from a long journey to find that his wife, Maria, had died accidentally, and he wrote this musical monument trying to weave in his sorrow, despair and loneliness. I sympathized with his emotion from the very first note I played. Not a single note in his music being redundant, I tried to sing while playing, bearing in mind that this is a dance in triple meter. In my opinion, his sorrow is best expressed in the broad arpeggio passage in the latter part of the first D minor section of the triptych. Playing this always brings tears to my eyes. Most performers play this passage fast and quite technically, but I play it in the tempo which enables me to make emotional sonority, better reflecting his feelings and making the bass voice clearly audible. At the end of this section, the opening theme reappears. It seems as if the composer's grief is easing little by little, and at the beginning of the next D major section, he starts remembering sweet days with Maria. To me, the highlight of *Chaconne* is the second theme of this section. The melody again makes me cry, so I add tremolo only to this melody line. At the last part of this D major section, I play the melody with dead stroke technique in the right hand to brighten the sound. It is here that I believe Bach is encouraging himself to live on Maria's behalf. The third section in D minor is, I can imagine, a reminiscence. I apply arpeggios to the first theme chords, but not to the last theme. Unlike its gloomy beginning, I think *Chaconne* ends as a kind of vigorous hymn for life.

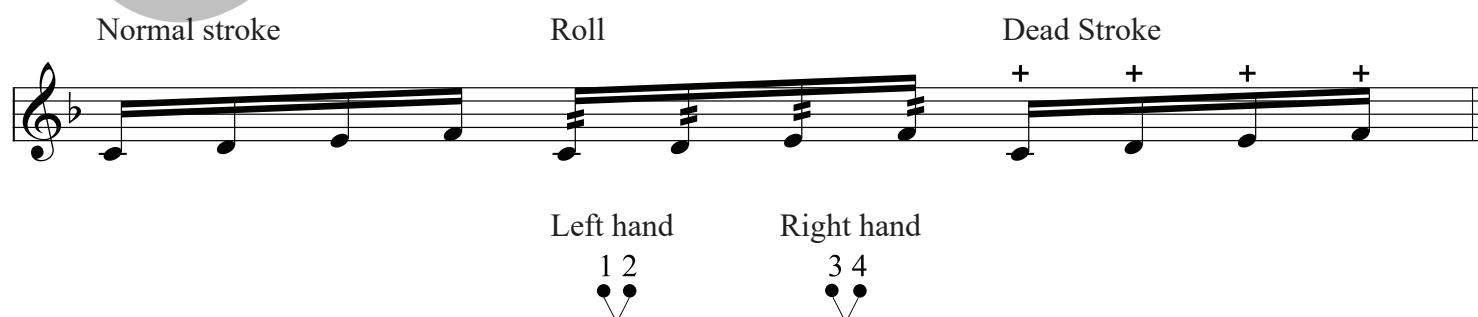
I was so fortunate to have Yehudi Wyner give me three coaching sessions on the *Chaconne*. His wisdom and experience (He was the keyboard artist for the Bach Aria Group as well as a Pulitzer Prize winning composer) was tremendously important. One of his profound, yet simple observations was to phrase with three beats per measure starting on the second beat. This revelation led me to rethink my phrasing of the entire work.

## Afterword

This recording is the greatest accomplishment of my life. I was pleased to hear from a listener that I am the Segovia of Marimba. I will be eternally grateful if my arrangement will live forever in the history of music, like that of Segovia. I still continue to practice the *Chaconne* every day. Bach is so deep that new discoveries are revealed each time I play, and I consider myself fortunate to have come across music that has so profoundly changed my life.

  
Mika Stoltzman, Editor

## Notations



# Chaconne for Marimba

SU826

J. S. Bach

arranged by Mika Stoltzman

Marimba  $\text{♩} = 40-50$  *mf*

Measures 1 through 29 are shown, with measure numbers indicated above the staff. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf* and *rit.* (ritardando). The tempo is marked as  $\text{♩} = 40-50$ . The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

Johannes Brahms, in a letter to Clara Schumann in June 1877, said about the *Chaconne*, "On one stave, for a small instrument, the man writes a whole world of the deepest thoughts and most powerful feelings. If I imagined that I could have created, even conceived the piece, I am quite certain that the excess of excitement and earth-shattering experience would have driven me out of my mind." While numerous transcriptions have been made for keyboard, strings, chamber ensembles and even full orchestra (Leopold Stokowski), this publication edited by world-renown marimba artist, **Mika Stoltzman**, is the first-ever version written for solo marimba. A video of **Stoltzman** performing this stunning edition at the Purchase Performing Center in New York is available at [keisersouthernmusic.com](http://keisersouthernmusic.com).



"**Mika Stoltzman** plays her transcription of Bach's *Chaconne* with greater rhythmic rigour, yet her interpretation feels similarly contemplative, and her delicate touch brings an unexpected and touching fragility to this monumental work." -*Gramophone*

"The most spectacular aspect is perhaps **Mika Stoltzman's** imagination in realizing Bach's polyphonic thinking in shimmering textures in the transcription of the great *Chaconne*, from the *Partita No. 2* for solo violin, BWV 1004. Absolutely superb, an unexpected masterpiece." -*Allmusic*

## ABOUT THE EDITOR

**Mika Stoltzman** has been described by *The Los Angeles Times* as a "high-wire jazz marimbist... an amazing, energetic performer ready for major exposure," and a "Japanese Marimba Maestro," by *Time Out New York*. All About Jazz raves, "**Mika Stoltzman** is beyond category, to use Duke Ellington's signature compliment."

**Mika** has toured to 19 countries and 65 cities around the world. She has performed nine times at Carnegie Hall (Zankel and Weill Hall), as well as at PASIC, the Blue Note in New York, the Tokyo and Cairo Jazz Festivals, and the Rockport Jazz Festival. She regularly performs around the world in a duo with her husband, clarinetist **Richard Stoltzman**, at major venues in New York, Boston, Austin, Buenos Aires, Mexico, Hong Kong, Japan, Germany and many more.

**Mika Stoltzman** is from Amakusa, a small island in the Kumamoto prefecture in southern Japan. Her grandparents played traditional Japanese instruments, while her aunt taught piano and her father was a Kendo master. She began studying piano at age three, and in junior high became fascinated by the drums. At eighteen, she found the marimba, a perfect combination of piano and percussion. She studied marimba at Toronto University with members of NEXUS, and later moved to New York in 2008. She now resides in Boston.

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