

HEINRICH IGNAZ FRANZ VON BIBER

Mystery Sonatas

DIE ROSENKLANZ-SONATEN



Alan Choo, violin | Apollo's Fire | Jeannette Sorrell

HEINRICH IGNAZ FRANZ VON BIBER (1644-1704)

Mystery Sonatas

DIE ROSENKRANZ-SONATEN

ALAN CHOO, *violin*

APOLLO'S FIRE | *on period instruments*

Jeannette Sorrell, *artistic director & harpsichord*

René Schiffer, *cello & viola da gamba*

Kivie Cahn-Lipman, *lirone & viola da gamba*

William Simms, *theorbo & baroque guitar*

Brian Kay, *archlute & percussion*

Anna O'Connell, *triple harp*

Peter Bennett, *chamber organ*

This recording is generously sponsored by **ASTRI SEIDENFELD**

Recorded at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Cleveland Heights, Ohio on November 19, 2021;
September 26-29, 2022; November 30-December 1, 2022; February 8-9, 2023; March 31, 2023; May 15-16, 2023.

Recording Producer and Editor: Erica Brenner

Recording and Mix Engineer: Daniel Shores

Mastering Engineer: Paul Blakemore

Cover photo: Yong Junyi

Cover design: KeinZweifel

Booklet design: KeinZweifel and Walter Green

Booklet photos: Evan Prunty

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DISC 1 - THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES

Sonata No. 1 in D Minor: *The Annunciation*

- ① Praeludium 2:21
- ② Aria (Allegro) - Variatio - Finale 3:39

*Jeannette Sorrell, harpsichord; René Schiffer, cello; William Simms, theorbo
Kivie Cahn-Lipman, lirone; Peter Bennett, chamber organ*

Sonata No. 2 in A Major: *The Visitation*

- ③ Sonata 1:36
- ④ Allaman 2:38
- ⑤ Presto 0:48

Jeannette Sorrell, harpsichord; René Schiffer, cello; William Simms, theorbo; Anna O'Connell, triple harp

Sonata No. 3 in B Minor: *The Nativity*

- ⑥ Sonata 1:35
- ⑦ Courente - Double 3:14
- ⑧ Adagio 2:10

Anna O'Connell, triple harp; René Schiffer, viola da gamba; William Simms, theorbo

Sonata No. 4 in D Minor: *The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple*

- ⑨ Ciacona 7:57

*Jeannette Sorrell, harpsichord; William Simms, theorbo; Brian Kay, archlute; Kivie Cahn-Lipman, lirone;
Peter Bennett, chamber organ*

Sonata No. 5 in A Major: *The Finding of Jesus in the Temple*

- ⑩ Praeludium 0:53
- ⑪ Allaman 1:33
- ⑫ Guigue 1:25
- ⑬ Saraban - Double 3:08

William Simms, theorbo; René Schiffer, cello



Heinrich Biber

DISC 1 - THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

Sonata No. 6 in C Minor: *The Agony in the Garden*

- | | |
|-------------------|------|
| ⑭ Lamento | 3:45 |
| ⑮ [Aria] - Adagio | 4:12 |

William Simms, theorbo; Brian Kay, archlute; Kivie Cahn-Lipman, lirone; Peter Bennett, chamber organ

Sonata No. 7 in F Major: *The Scourging at the Pillar*

- | | |
|------------------------|------|
| ⑯ Allamanda - Variatio | 4:49 |
| ⑰ Sarabanda - Variatio | 4:48 |

Jeannette Sorrell, harpsichord; William Simms, theorbo; Brian Kay, archlute; René Schiffer, cello

Sonata No. 8 in B flat Major: *The Crowning with Thorns*

- | | |
|--|------|
| ⑱ Sonata: Adagio - Presto - [Adagio] | 2:18 |
| ⑲ Guigue - Double (Presto) - Double II | 5:06 |

Jeannette Sorrell, harpsichord; René Schiffer, cello

Sonata No. 9 in A Minor: *The Carrying of the Cross*

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| ⑳ Sonata | 2:21 |
| ㉑ Courente - Double - [Double II] | 3:45 |
| ㉒ Finale | 1:32 |

William Simms, theorbo; René Schiffer, cello; Peter Bennett, chamber organ

Sonata No. 10 in G Minor: *The Crucifixion*

- | | |
|-------------------|------|
| ㉓ Praeludium | 1:09 |
| ㉔ Aria - Variatio | 8:06 |

Jeannette Sorrell, harpsichord; William Simms, theorbo; Brian Kay, archlute; René Schiffer, cello

DISC 1 TOTAL TIME:

75:04



DISC 2 - THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

Sonata No. 11 in G Major: *The Resurrection*

- | | |
|---------------------------|------|
| ① Sonata | 2:35 |
| ② Surrexit Christus hodie | 4:07 |
| ③ Adagio | 1:14 |

William Simms, theorbo; Anna O'Connell, triple harp
Kivie Cahn-Lipman, viola da gamba; Peter Bennett, chamber organ

Sonata No. 12 in C Major: *The Ascension*

- | | |
|---------------------|------|
| ④ Intrada | 0:38 |
| ⑤ Aria Tubicinum | 1:23 |
| ⑥ Allamanda | 2:32 |
| ⑦ Courente - Double | 3:08 |

Jeannette Sorrell, harpsichord; William Simms, theorbo
Anna O'Connell, triple harp; René Schiffer, cello; Brian Kay, percussion

Sonata No. 13 in D Minor: *The Descent of the Holy Spirit*

- | | |
|-------------------|------|
| ⑧ Sonata | 3:12 |
| ⑨ Gavott - Guigue | 3:12 |
| ⑩ Sarabanda | 1:36 |

William Simms, theorbo; Brian Kay, archlute; René Schiffer, cello
Peter Bennett, chamber organ

Sonata No. 14 in D Major: *The Assumption of Mary*

- | | |
|---------------------------|------|
| ⑪ [Praeludium] | 2:18 |
| ⑫ Aria - Aria II - Guigue | 6:29 |

Jeannette Sorrell, harpsichord; William Simms, theorbo & baroque guitar
Brian Kay, archlute; René Schiffer, cello; Anna O'Connell, triple harp



DISC 2 - THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

Sonata No. 15 in C Major: *The Coronation of Mary*

- | | |
|---------------------|------|
| ⑬ Sonata | 1:37 |
| ⑭ Aria – [Variatio] | 6:09 |
| ⑮ Canzon | 2:23 |
| ⑯ Sarabanda | 2:30 |

*Jeannette Sorrell, harpsichord; René Schiffer, cello
William Simms, theorbo; Brian Kay, archlute
Kivie Cahn-Lipman, lirone; Anna O'Connell, triple harp
Peter Bennett, chamber organ*

Passacaglia (Sonata No. 16) in G Minor: *The Guardian Angel*

- | | |
|---------------|------|
| ⑰ Passacaglia | 9:32 |
|---------------|------|

DISC 2 TOTAL TIME: 54:45

Fantasy & Mysticism: Heinrich Biber's Timeless "Mystery" Cycle

by Jeannette Sorrell

A mysterious masterpiece, nearly 350 years old... full of enticing clues about its meaning and symbolism, but lacking any clear information as to how it should be played... and above all, requiring such virtuosity that perhaps the composer himself was the only violinist in his time who could perform it...



Is it surprising that Heinrich Biber's *Sonatas on the Mystery of the Rosary* have haunted every musician who has encountered them? Biber's great 15-sonata cycle – plus its postlude, the timeless *Passacaglia in G minor* – remained unpublished in his lifetime. Biber did publish much of his other music – chamber music and sacred choral works – so why did he not publish the *Mystery Sonatas*? Perhaps he felt that something so mystical did not need to be published. But fortunately for us, the manuscript survived.

Living in the second half of the 17th century, Heinrich Biber was Austria's answer to Monteverdi – a daring composer who pushed the limits of the current style, and of the current instruments. (Beethoven did much the same, 150 years later.) Biber was the greatest violin composer of his century, and probably one of the four or five greatest of all time. As a performer, he was admired for his astonishing ability to reach the high 6th and 7th positions on the violin (very rare for a baroque violinist, due to the lack of a chinrest); and for his skill with multiple



stopping of strings, which allowed him to bring out polyphony in the music (playing multiple voices at the same time). This latter technique was emulated by J.S. Bach one generation later. Indeed, Bach's famous *Chaconne in D Minor* for solo violin was clearly influenced by Biber's *Passacaglia in G Minor*.

Biber's *Mystery Sonatas* comes down to us in a manuscript dating from around 1676, housed in the Bavarian State Library in Munich. One only needs to look at the florid, fantastical writing on the first page to guess that this is programmatic music (music that tells a story). Biber masterfully uses the *stylus phantasticus* throughout many of these sonatas – a dazzling 17th-century style of instrumental composition featuring rhapsodic and virtuosic passages to convey emotions and affects. But unlike Vivaldi in *The Four Seasons*, Biber did not use words to indicate what the music is depicting. The only clue he provided is a copper engraving illustration at the start of each sonata in the manuscript (reproduced in the following pages).

For a person who is familiar with the story of Jesus, these engravings are recognizable as illustrations of the major events in the life of Jesus and the Virgin Mary – the events known in Catholic tradition

as the Mysteries of the Rosary. Thus, each Sonata in this cycle is depicting one of these events in the lives of Jesus and Mary.

In Biber's day, the fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary were divided by the Catholic Church into three categories:

- o **The Joyful Mysteries** (the Angel Gabriel brings the good news to young Mary that she will be the mother of the Messiah; she goes to visit her older cousin Elizabeth to share this incredible news; the babe is born in a manger in Bethlehem; he is presented in the Temple; and later, as a precocious boy, is found in the Temple discussing theology with the elders);
- o **The Sorrowful Mysteries** (Jesus' agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, knowing he is about to be betrayed and arrested; he is whipped or scourged by Roman soldiers who placed on his head the crown of thorns, then forced to carry his own cross to the crucifixion site, Golgotha; and is crucified);
- o **The Glorious Mysteries** (the Resurrection of Christ, his ascension to Heaven, the descent of the Holy Spirit who visited Jesus' disciples at Pentecost; the assumption of Mary, in which she is taken up body and soul into heavenly glory; and her coronation in Heaven).

In Catholic tradition, each "mystery" provides an anchor for meditation and prayer, providing insights for our own lives today. Biber seems to have echoed this philosophy by challenging the performers of this music to discover the meaning and significance of the story in each sonata, and in each section of each sonata. Thus, a journey through the *Mystery Sonatas* is a spiritual undertaking for the performers, as well as the listeners.

The Mystery of the Accompaniment

Biber gave no indication of which instruments should play the *basso continuo* (the accompaniment). This was typical of the time – baroque composers generally gave few indications of which instruments should play the *continuo*. In theory, one could just use harpsichord or organ for the entire 15-sonata

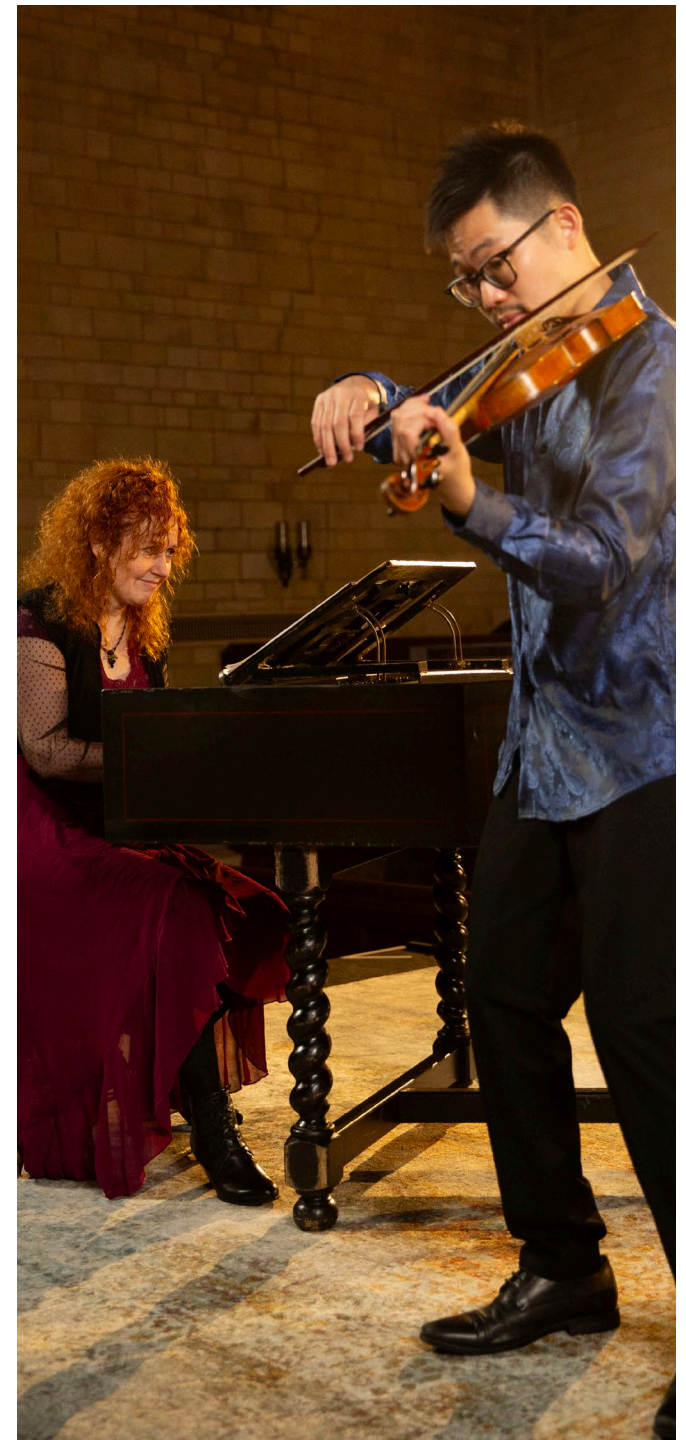
cycle – and this has been done on several recordings. But as a *continuo* player myself, I have always felt that the extraordinarily imaginative writing in Biber's masterpiece calls for an imaginative and colorful approach to the accompaniment. The evocative possibilities of the continuo accompaniment, as partners in the storytelling, deserve to be explored with love and curiosity. This is why I wanted to record Biber's Mystery cycle.

So, we have used a colorful array of continuo instruments – harpsichord, organ, cello, archlute, theorbo, baroque harp, viola da gamba, and lirone. We did not use them all at once of course. Rather, they emerge and disappear throughout the album. Each instrument is an actor, stepping into the story to say its lines and provide its unique color, then stepping off stage to make way for the next actor.

A final note...

As the artistic director of Apollo's Fire, I waited over 25 years to record the *Mystery Sonatas* because I was waiting for the right violinist – a violinist who is a great storyteller, a spiritual soul, and a virtuoso who could master the extraordinary technical challenges of this music. That violinist appeared on the scene in 2017 as one of our Young Artist Apprentices, and five years later became our Concertmaster. It has been a joy to record these pieces with Alan Choo.

© Jeannette Sorrell December 2023
Cleveland, Ohio



SIXTEEN SONATAS, SIX VIOLINS, AND FIFTEEN TUNINGS

by Alan Choo

Biber's *Mystery Sonatas* are remarkable for their use of *scordatura* ("mis-tuning" or "wrong tuning" in Italian). *Scordatura* is the alteration of the standard tuning of a stringed instrument. Biber's contemporaries, including Schmelzer and Pachelbel, also incorporated this technique in their compositions to some degree. But Biber's extensive and highly imaginative use of *scordatura* was and remains unsurpassed. He used *scordatura* to achieve three different goals: (1) allowing the performer to execute otherwise impossible chords on the instrument; (2) enabling the violin to ring more vibrantly than would otherwise be possible, by tuning the open strings to match the tonic (or dominant) chord of the key of each sonata; and (3) highlighting the storytelling by choosing tunings that provide a brighter color for the *Joyful* and *Glorious Mysteries*, in contrast with a darker color for the *Sorrowful Mysteries*.

Here follows a little tour through these 16 pieces, with particular attention to the role of the *scordatura*.

THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES



Sonata No. 1 in D Minor – *The Annunciation*

Tuning: G – D – A – E

Our journey through the *Mysteries* begins with the archangel Gabriel descending to earth to announce to the Virgin Mary that she will be the mother of the Messiah.

This dramatic news receives appropriately dramatic treatment. The *Prelude* features virtuosic passage-work suggesting the fluttering of angel wings. This is followed by the tender *Aria* and variations, which seem to convey Mary's inner world

upon hearing such news. The *Finale* returns to *stylus phantasticus* writing, conjuring

up a mysterious and dramatic atmosphere that builds to a thrilling climax, as the final D major chord seemingly symbolizes the moment of conception.



Sonata No. 2 in A Major – *The Visitation*

Tuning: A – E – A – E

The first of the *scordatura* sonatas sees Biber tuning the lower two strings up a tone to A – E, mirroring the top two strings an octave lower. This causes the violin to ring resplendently in the key of A major. The bright, sunny overtones in this sonata correspond with the joyful news Mary brings to her cousin Elizabeth, who was also miraculously pregnant with St. John the Baptist in her old age. The infant in Elizabeth's womb leapt with joy upon Mary's visitation, conveyed vividly by the rapid, excited string crossings in the final *Presto*.



Sonata No. 3 in B Minor – *The Nativity*

Tuning: B – F \sharp – B – D

Biber brings the tuning of the strings closer in a B-minor triad with the D at the top, giving this sonata a subdued, peaceful quality evoking the quiet nativity scene at night. We aim to bring out the intimacy of this sonata even more with our choice of continuo instruments, beginning with a duet between violin and harp, and adding on the gentle combination of viola da gamba and theorbo later on. A tinge of sadness in this music is present, possibly foreshadowing the events to come.



Sonata No. 4 in D Minor – *The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple*

Tuning: A – D – A – D

Biber now puts together two fourths side by side to form a resplendent quality in D minor. This is the only sonata besides the final *Passacaglia* which is based on a ground bass from start to finish. With the D as the top string, passages of *bariolage* (string crossings) toward the end are even more effective with a ringing open string at the top. Moments of tenderness prevail in the sonata as Joseph and Mary appear as parents of the infant baby Jesus, presenting him to the Temple in Jerusalem.



Sonata No. 5 in A Major – *The Finding of Jesus in the Temple*

Tuning: A – E – A – C#

This sonata follows the formula of the *Nativity Sonata*, outlining an A-major triad in its tuning, allowing for a remarkable C# unison near the beginning of the piece. After three days of searching, Joseph and Mary find 12-year-old Jesus sitting in the temple courts amongst the elders, who were all amazed at the young Jesus' maturity and understanding. An open warmth is felt in this full tuning, and perhaps a sense of relief upon finding the boy.

THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES



Sonata No. 6 in C Minor – *The Agony in the Garden*

Tuning: A \flat – E \flat – G – D

Following the sweetness of the *Joyful Mysteries*, the first C-minor chord of the *Sorrowful Mysteries* hits us in the face. With a *scordatura* of two flattened notes in the bass – A \flat and E \flat , and the top two strings brought down a tone, Biber creates darkness in the sound, signaling that we are now entering a difficult chapter in our journey. This sonata features striking dissonances within the open strings – the clashing between A \flat and G, and E \flat and D – evoking a sense of struggle.



Sonata No. 7 in F Major – *The Scourging at the Pillar*

Tuning: C – F – A – C

In the 7th sonata in F-major tuning, we hear first a tender and prayerful *Allamanda* that seems a little more removed from all the action, as if from the perspective of a

faithful follower of Christ who believes in the ultimate redemption following all this incredible suffering. The *Sarabanda* plunges us right into the action, with the first variation imitating scourging with its violent bow strokes. A surreal moment is heard in the second variation, composed entirely of unison *bariolage* writing which is only possible with this *scordatura*.



Sonata No. 8 in B flat Major – *The Crowning with Thorns*

Tuning: D – F – B \flat – D

This incredibly closed tuning (all open strings within an octave) features the most extreme re-tuning of the lowest string on a violin from the G up to a D (I had to use the lowest gauge G string on my violin for that). With just harpsichord and cello, we exploited the full range of colors available to us, including *pizzicato* textures and the use of the 4-foot register on the harpsichord in the final *Double II*. The insistent rhythms of the *Guigue* convey a mocking quality and an unrelenting stiffness, as the crown of thorns is forced onto the head of Jesus.



Sonata No. 9 in A Minor – *The Carrying of the Cross*

Tuning: C – E – A – E

A sense of deep pathos is immediately felt in the opening Sonata, filled with intense suspensions and sighing figures. The weight of the cross is heavy, and we feel the painful burden. Similar to the *Annunciation Sonata*, passages of *stylus phantasticus* frame this sonata, accentuating the drama through freewheeling virtuosity.



Sonata No. 10 in G Minor – *The Crucifixion*

Tuning: G – D – A – D

Beginning dramatically with a four-note motif symbolizing the crucifix, the *Praeludium* is relentless in its rhythmic figures evoking the nailing of Jesus to the cross. Here, a simple lowering of just the top string from an E to D now allows the violin to play a closed G-minor triad, generating lots of overtones in the sorrowful key of G minor. The tender *Aria* that follows could symbolize Mary weeping at the foot of the cross. The furious virtuosity of the last variation rounds off the *Sorrowful Mysteries* with ruthless intensity.

THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES



Sonata No. 11 in G Major – *The Resurrection*

Tuning: G – G – D – D

In what is probably the most experimental *scordatura* tuning of the sonatas, Biber once again calls for two open fifths in the tuning, but now exchanging the positions of the middle two strings such that the two Gs are adjacent to each other at the bottom, and the two Ds next to each other at the top. Besides giving this G-major Sonata a truly glorious and open sound, this modification allows for the execution of consecutive octaves and tenths on the violin, a sonority that is rarely heard on the violin (at least in the baroque era!). Above all, the crossing of strings visually forms a physical cross at the scroll and between the bridge and fingerboard of the violin, adding a deep layer of symbolism to the first of the *Glorious Mysteries*.



Sonata No. 12 in C Major – *The Ascension*

Tuning: C – E – G – C

A full C-major chord forms the *scordatura* of this sonata, in a key that is associated with triumph and glory. Rising scales symbolize Christ's ascension to Heaven in the opening *Intrada*, followed by an *Aria Tubicinum*, imitating the sounds of a trumpet. The march-like military nature of this extraordinary section (with its glorious C-major goodness of the open strings) has inspired us to add drums to the mix, further evoking a grand, triumphant procession.



Sonata No. 13 in D Minor – *The Descent of the Holy Spirit*

Tuning: A – E – C# – E

According to the Gospels, Pentecost was the day when the Apostles were all gathered, and a sudden mighty wind came down from Heaven, filling them all with the Holy Spirit. The opening Sonata vividly captures this miracle, evoking the sound of sudden winds with rapid double-stop trills in thirds and sixths. This is made possible with the ingenious *scordatura* tuning of an A-major triad, which allows me to press two strings with the same finger and trill freely, instead of using two different fingers on each string in the standard tuning system, which would make those double-stop trills almost impossible to execute at this speed.



Sonata No. 14 in D Major – *The Assumption of Mary*

Tuning: A – E – A – D

Our last two *Mysteries* turn toward the Virgin Mary, beginning with her Assumption to Heaven. A glorious *Praeludium* with *stylus phantasticus* opens the work, followed by a joyful ground-bass party piece. The *scordatura* tuning allows access to brilliant overtones both in the tonic D major and dominant

A major. We accentuate the party mood by adding a strumming guitar to the mix. The ending of this sonata curiously sees the solo violin drop out mid-phrase, leaving the continuo section to end alone. To us, we see an image of the Virgin Mary ascending up to Heaven and disappearing from earthly view, inspiring us to orchestrate the last page with continuo instruments dropping out in sequence, leaving the celestial harp with the final word.



Sonata No. 15 in C Major – *The Coronation of Mary*

Tuning: G – C – G – D

This final *scordatura* sonata features a mellow tuning system, with all strings but the lowest string lowered by a tone to give the resonances a serene, grounded quality. Similarly to the *Assumption Sonata*, it allows both the tonic C major and dominant G major chords to ring resplendently. For this last *tutti* track, we have included all 7 musicians of our colorful continuo team, notably in the *Canzon* where they enter one by one with each iteration of the theme, accentuating Biber's exciting build-up of energy. The *Coronation of Mary* is one of grandeur and glory, culminating in this *Canzon* before ending with a tender *Sarabanda*.



Passacaglia (Sonata No. 16) in G Minor – *The Guardian Angel*

Tuning: G – D – A – E

Now that all this has happened, what does it mean for us, in this mortal world? This is the question I ask myself as I perform the solo *Passacaglia* that serves as an epilogue to the *Mystery Sonatas*. Not officially part of the *Mysteries of the Rosary*, this final piece in Biber's set is preceded by a copper engraving of a Guardian Angel leading a child by hand, suggesting that it was probably associated with the Feast of the Guardian Angel on 2 October. The use of a lone solo violin – coming out of 15 accompanied sonatas – is also poignant as we are now left alone to contemplate the meaning of all that has happened. Yet, we are never alone, as a Guardian Angel walks with us, just like the 4-note

descending ground bass which this piece is built on – it never leaves us. Biber's *Passacaglia in G Minor* features a level of complex polyphonic writing which was, at this point in history, unparalleled in solo violin music. It paves the way for J.S. Bach's great *Chaconne in D minor*.

Alan Choo, December 2023
Cleveland, Ohio

The use of a unique *scordatura* tuning for each sonata means that a violinist needs to use multiple violins if performing several of the pieces in the same week – each violin kept at the tuning of its respective sonata. Otherwise, the constant re-tuning of a violin would destabilize its tuning. I used a total of six violins in this recording. The personality of each instrument shines through. My heartfelt thanks to Julie Andrijeski, Miho Hashizume and Guillermo Salas-Suárez for generously lending me their instruments for this project. – AC



ALAN CHOO

“Alan Choo was a dynamo, delivering lines with panache.

He exemplified virtuosity”

– CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER



Photo: Moonrise Studio

Violinist Alan Choo, whose performances have been described by *The Straits Times Singapore* as “an intoxicating brew of poetry and dare-devilry,” performs on the global stage as a soloist, chamber musician and baroque specialist. The Concertmaster and Assistant Artistic Director of Apollo's Fire, he made his solo debut with the ensemble at the Tanglewood and Ravinia Music Festivals in 2017, and has directed multiple programs with the group since 2019. He is also Founder and Artistic Director of Red Dot Baroque, Singapore's first

professional baroque ensemble, and Ensemble-in-Residence at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music.

Choo has appeared as a soloist with Apollo's Fire at Carnegie Hall (NY), the Tanglewood Music Festival (MA), Ravinia Music Festival (IL) and St. Martin in the Fields (London, UK), and also with the FVG Orchestra (Italy), the St. Petersburg Symphony Orchestra (Russia), Tafelmusik Winter Institute Orchestra (Canada), Singapore Symphony Orchestra, Singapore Chinese Orchestra, Orchestra of the Music Makers (Singapore), and more.

Choo has given masterclasses in violin performance, performance practice and stage presence to students at Cleveland Institute of Music, Michigan State University, Baldwin-Wallace College, Bowling Green State University, Yong Siew Toh Conservatory and Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts. He is also the recipient of the Early Music Award 2016 from Peabody Conservatory, Paul Abisheganaden Grant for Artistic Excellence 2015, Goh Soon Tioe Centenary Award 2014, Grace Clagett Ranney Prize in Chamber Music 2014 and 1st prize in the Singapore National Piano and Violin Competition 2011, Artist Category.

Choo holds a Doctorate in Historical Performance from Case Western Reserve University and degrees from Peabody Conservatory and Yong Siew Toh Conservatory. His teachers include Julie Andrijeski, Risa Browder, Victor Danchenko and Alexander Souptel.

JEANNETTE SORRELL

***“Sorrell led a resplendent performance...
breathtaking.”***

– NEW YORK TIMES



Photo: Apollo's Fire

GRAMMY®-winning conductor Jeannette Sorrell is recognized internationally as one of today's most compelling interpreters of Baroque and Classical repertoire, and a leader in creative programming exploring cultural roots. She is the subject of the documentary by Oscar-winning director Allan Miller, titled ***PLAYING WITH FIRE: Jeannette Sorrell and the Mysteries of Conducting*** (commercially released in 2023).

Sorrell studied conducting at the Aspen and the Tanglewood music festivals under Leonard Bernstein and Roger Norrington and harpsichord with Gustav Leonhardt in Amsterdam. She won First Prize in

the Spivey International Harpsichord Competition, competing against over 70 harpsichordists from four continents.

In demand as a guest conductor, Sorrell has repeatedly conducted the New York Philharmonic, Pittsburgh Symphony, St Paul Chamber Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, Utah Symphony, Florida Orchestra, New World Symphony, and Philharmonia Baroque in San Francisco. She has also led the Philadelphia Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic (Bach's *St John Passion*), the National Symphony at the Kennedy Center, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Opera St Louis with the St Louis Symphony, and Houston Symphony, among others. In 2024 she debuts with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the Baltimore Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony, and the Orchestra of St Luke's at Carnegie Hall.

As founder and conductor of APOLLO'S FIRE, she has led the renowned ensemble at London's BBC Proms, Carnegie Hall, and many international venues. Sorrell and Apollo's Fire have released 30 commercial CDs, including 11 bestsellers on the Billboard classical chart and a 2019 GRAMMY® winner. Her CD recordings of the Bach's *St John Passion* and Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* have been chosen as best in the field by the *Sunday Times of London* (2020 and 2021). Her Monteverdi *Vespers* recording was chosen by *BBC Music Magazine* as one of "30 Must-Have Recordings for Our Lifetime" (September 2022). With over 15 million views of her YouTube videos, Sorrell has attracted national attention and awards for creative programming.

APOLLO'S FIRE

“Sorrell and her dazzling period band... are incandescent.”

– THE SUNDAY TIMES, London



Photo: Apollo's Fire

Named for the classical god of music and the sun, Apollo's Fire is a GRAMMY®-winning ensemble. Founded by award-winning harpsichordist and conductor Jeannette Sorrell, the period band is dedicated to the baroque ideal that music should evoke the various *Affekts* or passions in the listeners. The Apollo's Fire musicians are creative artists who share Sorrell's passion for drama and rhetoric.

Apollo's Fire has performed five European tours, with sold-out concerts at the BBC Proms in London, Madrid's Royal Theatre, Bordeaux's Grand Théâtre de l'Opéra, the National Concert Hall of Ireland, and venues in France, Italy, Austria, and Portugal.

Chosen by the DAILY TELEGRAPH as one of London's

“Best 5 Classical Concerts of the Year,” Apollo's Fire's 2014 London performance was praised for *“superlative music-making... combining European stylishness with American entrepreneurialism.”*

North American tour engagements include Carnegie Hall (twice), the Tanglewood and Ravinia festivals (3 times), the Boston Early Music Festival series, the Aspen Music Festival, Library of Congress, the National Gallery of Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, and major venues in Toronto, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Most of these concerts have been sold out. In 2021, Apollo's Singers made their debut with the New York Philharmonic under the baton of Jeannette Sorrell, winning rave reviews.

At home in Cleveland, Apollo's Fire enjoys sold-out performances at its series, which has drawn national attention for creative programming.

With over 15 million views of its YouTube videos, Apollo's Fire has released 30 commercial CDs and won a GRAMMY® award in 2019 for the album *Songs of Orpheus* with tenor Karim Sulayman. Eleven of the ensemble's CD releases have become best-sellers on the classical Billboard chart, including Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, Monteverdi *Vespers*, Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos*, and Sorrell's crossover programs including *Sacrum Mysterium – A Celtic Christmas Vespers*; *Sugarloaf Mountain – An Appalachian Gathering*; *Sephardic Journey – Wanderings of the Spanish Jews*; and *Christmas on Sugarloaf Mountain*.



Also available from Apollo's Fire on AVIE

AV 2350



AV 2208

AV 2485



AV 2207



apollosfire.org

