



# GAPPLEGATE MUSIC REVIEW

16 MARCH 2016

**JS Bach: Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin**  
**Hlif Sigurjonsdottir**  
**MS1605**

I never tire of Johann Sebastian Bach, especially much of the solo repertoire. Of course that does not mean I automatically love every version that comes out. But the new 2-CD performances of Danish-Icelandic violinist Hlif Sigurjonsdottir doing his Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin (MSR Classics 1605) hits a nerve with me.

Of course the beauty of the music bears more than one interpretation, and I find that Ms. Sigurjonsdottir's way with the music adds a fresh dimension. Part of that undoubtedly has to do with her mentors, Bjorn Olafsson (who in turn studied with Adolph Busch) and Gerald Beal (who studied with Heifetz). They immersed her in these Bach works from an early age (in Olafsson's case) and went over the works with her in detail (in both cases) so that by the time she was a fully formed violin virtuoso she had absorbed and furthered a performance tradition (or two) that comes through strikingly on these recordings.

Hlif does not give us a rigorously baroque reading. She does not fill her phrases with a lot of ornamentation. Yet this is not an overly rubato-drenched romantic reading either. It IS a lovely and very lyrical reading that has more ecstatic expressiveness than I've heard elsewhere, a kind of steady-state expression of the joy of Bach's genius.

Her tone is full without being vibrato heavy. There is a luminousness in her sound that suits the music quite well.

This is first-rate interpretation, singularly sensitive to all the nuances of the music while bringing out the sheer beauty of the parts. If you already have a version or two of these pieces, this will augment the pleasure of the music with another reading, one that is vivaciously modern. If you do not have the music, here's your perfect chance to get an excellent version. Bravo!

<http://classicalmodernmusic.blogspot.com/2016/03/bach-hlif-sigurjonsdottir-sonatas-and.html>

GREGO APPELGATE EDWARDS