

J.S. BACH

**Violin Sonata No. 1
in G minor**

BWV 1001

Educational Edition

**With technical indications and
comments by Georges Enescu**

**Collected and edited
by Serge Blanc**

More information at www.sergeblanc.com

J.S. BACH

Sonata & Partita for Solo Violin

With technical indications and comments by Georges Enescu, collected and edited by Serge Blanc.

During the years of instruction he received from Maestro Georges Enescu, Serge Blanc noted and collected technical and interpretive indications for what Enescu called "The Himalayas of violinists": the Sonatas & Partitas for solo violin by Johann Sebastian Bach.

This exceptional document brings together these notes which concern sonority, phrasing, tempo, fingering, and expression. It is the culmination of the life's work of a master considered as one of the greatest interpreters of this work.

After having taught his own students for more than half a century, Serge Blanc wished to pass on to future generations of violinists the valuable guidance of Georges Enescu by collecting and commenting on his notes.

The complete document including Sonatas & Partitas BWV 1001 to BWV 1006, as well as Serge Blanc's recordings with Enescu, are available for free download at www.sergeblanc.com

Preface

It is common knowledge that the **Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin of JS Bach** were the daily bread of George Enescu, as they are for any musician who recognizes their value and necessity to their culture.

He considered these masterpieces as «the Himalayas of violinists» of which he was one of the greatest of the twentieth century!

He studied and taught this music all his life, both as a great performer with his reflection on all the technical problems posed by these particularly difficult works, but especially from the point of view of the brilliant composer that he was, understanding as well what this music expressed from the greatest musician of all time: JS Bach!

It was first and foremost necessary for Georges Enescu to transmit to future generations the wealth of his research, artistic, cultural and technical, that he had carried out and tested through his own magnificent career as a violinist alongside the career which mattered most to him, composer.

Once Georges Enescu returned to France in 1947 and decided to give lessons again, I had the opportunity to take them for five years, after which he offered me the unique opportunity to give a recital of the Sonatas with him at the piano! It was the chance of a lifetime.

During those five years, I had collected an enormous amount of his teachings, especially regarding what he considered the essential of musical culture: JS Bach!

I could not imagine at the time that the treasure he had passed to me, and to all his students (whom he modestly called his «colleagues»!), would serve me all my life as a musician... because it is only through experience that we understand what is contained in these works essential to the culture of any musician who plays a string instrument (violin, viola or cello).

It is no coincidence that all the great artists playing these instruments have spent their lives studying and playing these pieces throughout their careers ... indeed reediting them in their own manner. But though Georges Enescu played, taught, and recorded them often ... there is unfortunately no edition revealing his precise indications and his abundant comments!

One should be aware of the hardships that faced him at the time; he was over sixty years old and suffered from a serious disease of the spinal column, and he had lost at the same time all his possessions and his beloved homeland: Romania!

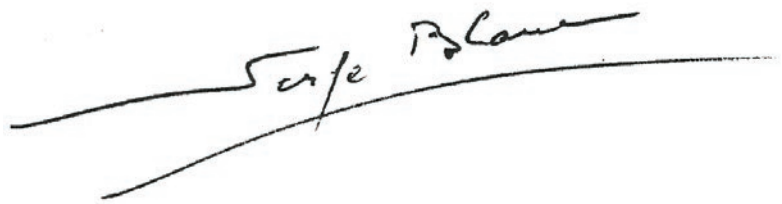
During the 55 years that followed, I continued thinking about the precious fruits of the education that I had received from this great master, learning how to pass on in my turn what I had received, passing on to each of my students the information that he had generously given to me in order to help them understand and interpret these pieces.

Proper tone, phrasing, musicality expressed in an artistic or intimate way, are the results obtained through a strict application of information and commentary gathered by patience and fierce determination!

For example concerning tempi advised by Enescu and shown at the beginning of each piece in this edition, he established these according to the indications given by the hand of JS Bach.

This single indication is essential ... but is not in any edition. But when a young student (or teacher!) approaches these works for the first time, they cannot have this knowledge innately ... Only later experience will eventually allow them to make their own interpretation and personal changes, having first understood the essential foundation thanks to proven sources.

It is the precious inheritance received by George Enescu that justifies the title **Educational Edition** that I have chosen.

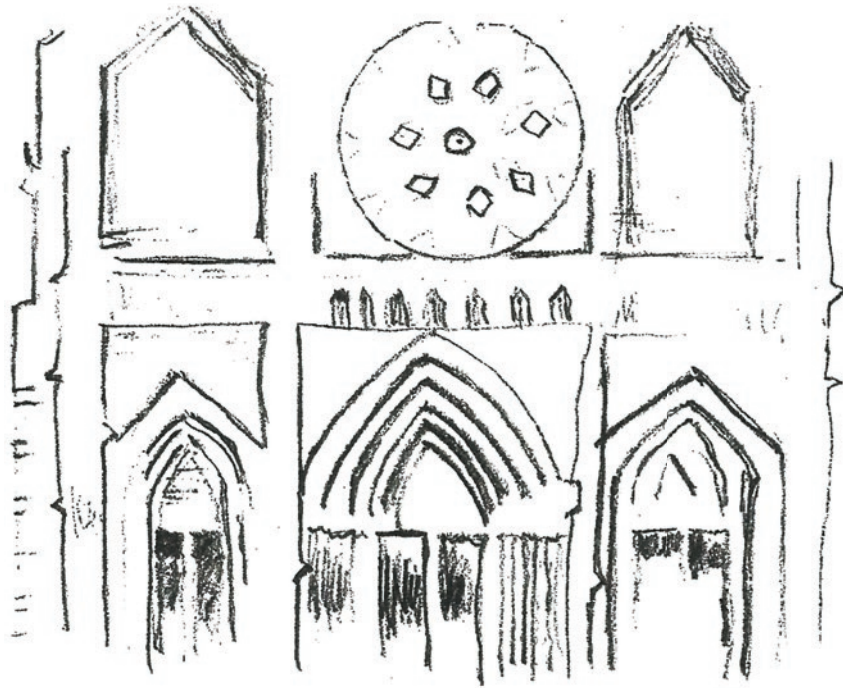
A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Serge Blanc". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The word "Serge" is written in a larger, more prominent script, while "Blanc" is written in a smaller, more compact script. The signature is positioned above a horizontal line that spans the width of the text area.

Serge Blanc

Sonata I

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ADAGIO (Prelude)



Imagine the gate of a cathedral

Clearly the mind and soul of George Enescu were stimulated by poetic imagery which inspired his musical genius ... See in particular his **Childhood Reminiscences** written in full maturity.

His constant revisiting of the **Sonatas and Partitas by JS Bach** throughout his life as a musician-composer-performer-teacher thus underwent the lasting effect of this imagery, and every valuable piece of this monument to the human spirit evoked for him a precise poetic vision that deeply marked his personal interpretation and therefore his teaching. I cannot forget the particular effect that marked his face and his musical demonstration at the piano when he wanted to communicate a particular interpretation.

That of the first opening **Adagio**, such a majestic Cathedral gate, this fabulous treasure of the human mind that are these **Sonatas and Partitas** that follow, was particularly striking.

Every time I happen to pass by the majestic door of Notre-Dame de Paris, the same emotion seizes me by the throat as when I interpret this sacred work ... or teach it!

Technically speaking, this means the search for a wide and beautiful sound, made possible by the use of great bow length and the observation of Enescu's indications in this direction.

I honestly think that this evocative power left a particular mark above all on the personality of George Enescu and that his students loved to submerge themselves in it.

They felt that their artistic life would be influenced and enriched in a profound way. We only had to let ourselves be carried along by the unforgettable memory, and then carry out the years of work that we would have to fulfill in order to approach as close as possible that level.

Regarding this first work, one must above all follow with great precision the rhythmic contours so clearly expressed by the hand of this demigod who was its author.

It is commonly known as a written improvisation ... and it is. But that of JS Bach and not just any performer who dares to take it up.

If we carefully observe the details of its rhythms, precise to the hundred twenty-eighth note, we must recognize that we have no more right to change a note value than to change a detail of a Rembrandt or a Michelangelo that one is pleased to admire.

But a musical work must also undergo the special handling of each performer as it cannot stay in manuscript form ... This is where the personality, more or less cultivated and respectfully intelligent of each artist who dares to approach, intervenes.

We must therefore start by trying to understand every detail conveyed by the author and not spare any time or trouble in finding the exact phrase.

This requires a lifetime, but what enrichment for the one who glimpses the infinite beauty.

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Adagio $\text{♩} = 40$



Sonata I

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FUGA

♩ = 76

Georges Enescu considered this **Fugue** as a model of its kind and JS Bach himself later transcribed it for organ.

Enescu's interpretation is clear from the notational point of view, but technically it is very difficult for the instrument.

The initial theme with its 4 repeated notes is easy to spot, but the chords that often state the theme require considerable attention to be played correctly.

The «architectural» construction of each exposition begins, almost always, by single notes that become two and then three notes. These then become 4 note chords thus creating a natural crescendo that grows until its cadence which is followed by a *divertimento* that is itself interrupted by the return of the theme.

In measures 83/84, the theme appears in the bass of 4 note chords, and it is musically necessary to attack these chords from the top notes to bring out the bass. These chords must be played fortissimo.

But this work is so well constructed that each rise of the theme is accompanied by a natural crescendo, even if it is not in the manuscript.

Enescu made one follow the natural evolution of the phrases with dynamics that emerged logically. Therefore they are included in this Educational Edition.

Enescu indicates these dynamics as precisely as fingerings and bowings.

The tempo ♩ = 76 remains **unchanged** apart from a subtle relaxing at the end of phrases and the immediate resumption at the recapitulation.

FUGA $\text{♩} = 76$

Allegro

(*p*) *sp.* (*mf*) (*f*)

leggiere *p*

cresc. *f*

p (*sp*)

pp

mf

pp

mf

(*expressif*)

Handwritten musical score for a piano piece, featuring ten staves of music. The score includes various annotations such as dynamics, articulation, and performance instructions.

Staff 1: Measures 1-4. Annotations: *SS*, *expressif*, *SOSTENUTO*.

Staff 2: Measures 5-8. Annotations: *pp*, *simile*, *p*.

Staff 3: Measures 9-12. Annotation: *f*.

Staff 4: Measures 13-15. Annotation: *p*.

Staff 5: Measures 16-18. Annotation: *calme*.

Staff 6: Measures 19-21. Annotation: *SOSTENUTO*.

Staff 7: Measures 22-24. Annotations: *mf*, *f*, *ff*.

Staff 8: Measures 25-27. Annotations: *ff*.

Staff 9: Measures 28-30. Annotations: *SOSTENUTO*, *P*.

Staff 10: Measures 31-33. Annotations: *SOSTENUTO*.


Handwritten musical score, measures 66 to 93. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, slurs, and fingerings. Performance instructions are written below the staff: *SOSTENUTO*, *rall.*, *TEMPO 10*, *SOST. ad lib.*, *LARGE*, and *LONG*. A circled section of measures 81-84 is marked with *SS*. The score is written on a single staff with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature.

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SICILIANA

♩ = 80/86

Of a dancing character in moderate tempo, this piece must keep its loosely swinging rhythm  in a «danceable» tempo, that is to say not to slow down too much.

The tempo here suggested by Enescu is ♩ = 80/86, with, as always, the relaxations at end of a phrase, but an immediate resumption of tempo with the following phrase.

Another important feature of this work is the three part contrapuntal writing: 1 bass and 2 sopranos



which implies the **choice** of sonorities appropriate to the imagined instruments playing together: 1 bassoon + 2 oboe **or** 2 flutes.

Here Enescu knew how to explain how to play the bass by searching for the sound of the bassoon (lighter bow near to the fingerboard) and that of the 2 oboe or flute (closer to the bridge) indicating also fingering which favored this contrast, hence some of them were made somewhat more difficult but effective..... by the choice of string.

The concentration of mind and will to do so ultimately make this effect possible and very musical.

Good luck, for this **Sicilian** is one of the most difficult pieces ... thus often required in competitions. But its beauty makes the work easier!

SICILIANNE $\text{♩} = 80 - 86$

(poco espressivo)


(dolce)
4^o Corde

The musical score is written for the 4th string of a violin or viola. It consists of 19 measures, grouped into five systems of four measures each, with the final measure of the fifth system being a half-measure. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked $\text{♩} = 80 - 86$. The performance instructions include "(poco espressivo)", "(dolce)", and "4^o Corde". The score is heavily annotated with fingerings (numbers 1-4) and bowings (vertical strokes with flags). Dynamic markings include *f* (forte) at measure 5, *p* (piano) at measure 13, and *p dolce ma sostenuto* at the beginning of measure 19. The word "calando" is written above the final measure. The notation includes various note values (quarter, eighth, sixteenth notes), rests, and complex rhythmic patterns.

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PRESTO

 = 208

This last movement, which concludes the **First Sonata**, is played very fast as indicated by its title, but above all **not** as a « Perpetuo mobile » in the pursuit of a world speed record!

First, we must «understand» the rhythm indicated in **measures of 3/8**, which is its basic structure.

Second, we must highlight the sequence of phrases indicated here by these beginning and end hooks  **which in no way implies any interruptions or tempo changes.**

This is more precisely a **punctuation** which translates into **pulses of slight bow pressure** where indicated. Overall this creates a musical structure that rightly avoids the banality of notes too rapid and devoid of artistic sense.

Likewise the dynamics indicated follow the **ascending** or **descending** melodic curves of this strongly conclusive work.

Presto $\text{♩} = 208$

f e deciso

7

dimin. *mf*

13

19

cresc.

25

f

31

37

43

dimin.

49

cresc.

55

61

67 *mf* 2 1 3 4

73 *dim.* *p* 4 3 2

79

85 0 3 4 *p*

91 2 0 2 *f*

97 *mf*

103 4

109 4

115 1 0 4

122 *p* 4

129 *p* *cresc.* 0 1 *f* *f*

Conclusion in the form of ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I am fully aware of what it means to boldly approach so closely two prestigious personalities like Jean-Sebastian Bach and George Enescu.

The first has been recognized for so long and everywhere as a Demi-God-Creator of music, and the second as the greatest interpreter of the **Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin**.

Having had the exceptional good fortune to work with Enesco for 5 years I always knew that he was offering me such a precious message that I immediately wrote down even the smallest detail with care... and I studied this and passed it to my students for 60 years...

I became aware during my participation of the Symposium of Bucharest for the 50th anniversary of his death that I had a duty to future generations of violinists to share Enescu's guidance, which I had jealously preserved for so long.

Having been unable to do this himself due to circumstances, I understood it was imperative to do so in his place before the information was lost forever.



Serge Blanc and Georges Enescu bowing at the end of their concert (Paris, 1952)
(recording available on www.sergeblanc.com)



For more information :

www.sergeblanc.com



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