

TRANS-ELCTRONIC MUSIC PRODUCTIONS, INC. PRESENTS
SWITCHED-ON BACH
 VIRTUOSO ELECTRONIC PERFORMANCE OF:
 BRAHMS/CONCERTO NO. 3 - NO. 60 IN A & C MAJOR
 "SOLO BY DR. MARK SCHNEIDER" - "STANDARD EXPOSED" CAPTAIN, AND 20
 TWO-PART OPERATIONS, "CHANGE" (PELLED "VACUUM" AIR)
 "PELLED" AND "PELLED" FROM THE "WELL" TO THE "CLARINET"
 PERFORMED BY THE HON. VIRTUOSUS

B L O O M S B U R Y



SWITCHED-ON BACH

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Switched-On Bach



Roshanak Kheshti

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Track Listing

Side one

1. "Sinfonia to Cantata No. 29"—3:20
2. "Air on a G String"—2:27
3. "Two-Part Invention in F Major"—0:40
4. "Two-Part Invention in B-Flat Major"—1:30
5. "Two-Part Invention in D Minor"—0:55
6. "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring"—2:56
7. "Prelude and Fugue No. 7 in E-Flat Major" (from Book I of The Well-Tempered Clavier)—7:07

Side two

1. "Prelude and Fugue No. 2 in C Minor" (from Book I of The Well-Tempered Clavier)—2:43
2. "Chorale Prelude 'Wachet Auf'" —3:37
3. "Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G Major: First Movement"—6:35

TRACK LISTING

4. “Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G Major: Second Movement”—2:50
5. “Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G Major: Third Movement”—5:05

Switched-on Prologue

Wendy Carlos was born in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, in November 1939—two months after the beginning of the Second World War. During the early years of the Cold War, she wrote her first composition. In 1962 Carlos graduated from Brown with a dual degree in music and physics, and in 1965 she earned her master's degree in music composition at the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center. By 1968, with the release of her groundbreaking electronic album *Switched-on Bach*, Carlos had tamed a postwar, antisocial, and paranoid spy technology (what would eventually become the vocoder and the Moog synthesizer) and given it a social life. With her unique background in both the sciences and musicology, she trained the prelinguistic grunts of tones pushed through filters to speak to masses. *Switched-on Bach* (hereafter endearingly referred to as *S-oB*) brought science to the “end user” in a way that is not prefabricated and preset—that is dynamic and interactive.

S-oB forged the sounds that have now become standard in modern electronic music and engendered a curiosity about the analog world through the synthesizer. The analog synthesizer is hardly an “intuitive” instrument—requiring

endless tweaking, twirling, and futzing—yet, after its massively popular debut on *S-oB*, it beckoned everyone, from the expert musician to the novice, to tweak its knobs. Despite all this, there is no mastering the instrument; not even Wendy Carlos—who Glenn Gould hailed as the most virtuosic of all Moog performers, declaring *S-oB* in 1968 the “record of the decade . . . certainly one of the great feats in the history of keyboard performance”¹—was its master. Analog synthesizers are almost impossible to keep in tune and are unpredictable in live performance settings, giving them a strange autonomy and making them notoriously difficult to tame. Unlike the majority of other musical instruments, designed to function in sacred worship or ritual ceremony, the synthesizer was born as a result of happy accidents that arose in the development of war machines. They are instruments that can’t be mastered, because there is no master religious or ritual narrative on which they are based. The analog synthesizer is a wild electric animal, the sci-fi creature no one saw coming.

As I will discuss in the following pages, Carlos’s interpretation of Bach’s greatest hits was only possible thanks to Bob Moog’s willingness to design a spec model to suit her needs and the experiments that Carlos and engineer/producer Rachel Elkind were performing on multitrack magnetic tape. *S-oB* is a product of tireless experiments with studio design, multitrack recording, and analog synthesis; it is a signature of Carlos’s well-known obsessive attention to detail and her painstaking interpretation of symphonic sounds through orchestration. A whole lot of technical, unglamorous tedium somehow managed to result in a record

that became a requisite item in not only the most discerning record collections but also the more mediocre ones. It was a sign of the times—this record becoming a means to imagining other worlds at a moment in history when the fate of the current one was dubious. A part of its appeal was the album cover, which prominently featured a modular Moog synthesizer set in contrast to a more traditional backdrop—ornate wooden furniture, a “Persian rug,” and a figure evoking Johann Sebastian Bach himself, in full Baroque attire. This instrument, which some interpreted to be a “computer,” was clearly something fantastic, and likewise inspired fantasies in its listeners. From its debut as *the* sound defining *S-oB* to its current mass popularity among synthesizer aficionados and electronic music fans, the analog synthesizer made these sounds of fantasy. Whether in sci-fi soundtracks or space pop, its sounds transported listeners to another world; Carlos’s recordings translated these otherworldly sounds into music.

The first time I consciously heard the Moog synthesizer was my first Stereolab show. When I arrived, local neighborhood residents were sliding quarters into the washers and dryers at Cincinnati’s Sudsy Malone’s Rock ’n’ Roll Laundry and Bar while members of Stereolab casually lounged around the bar area, in no real hurry to set up their instruments. The late afternoon had an air of the quotidian—long-overdue laundry to be done; the stale smell of spilled beer from many shows ago—hardly the prelude one might expect to a life-changing event. I watched as the petite Morgane Lhote wrestled the beastly twin Farfisa organ (a hallmark of the band’s sound in the 1990s), balancing it on its side as she teeter-shimmied it in