
Richard Tunnicliffe
Johann Sebastian Bach
Cello Suites

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)

Cello Suites

Disc 1

Suite No. 1 in G Major
BWV. 1007

① *Prelude* 2.50
② *Allemande* 4.11
③ *Courante* 2.47
④ *Sarabande* 3.09
⑤ *Menuets 1 & 2* 3.39
⑥ *Gigue* 1.49

Suite No. 2 in D minor
BWV. 1008

⑦ *Prelude* 4.14
⑧ *Allemande* 3.47
⑨ *Courante* 2.26
⑩ *Sarabande* 4.06
⑪ *Menuets 1 & 2* 3.14
⑫ *Gigue* 2.38

Suite No. 3 in C Major
BWV. 1009

⑬ *Prelude* 4.07
⑭ *Allemande* 3.39
⑮ *Courante* 3.06
⑯ *Sarabande* 4.49
⑰ *Bourrées 1 & 2* 3.39
⑱ *Gigue* 3.21

Disc 2

Suite No. 4 in E-flat Major
BWV. 1010

① *Prelude* 4.39
② *Allemande* 4.03
③ *Courante* 3.22
④ *Sarabande* 4.23
⑤ *Bourrées 1 & 2* 3.56
⑥ *Gigue* 2.51

Suite No. 5 in C minor
BWV. 1011

⑦ *Prelude* 6.41
⑧ *Allemande* 5.48
⑨ *Courante* 2.26
⑩ *Sarabande* 3.30
⑪ *Gavottes 1 & 2* 4.25
⑫ *Gigue* 2.22

Suite No. 6 in D Major
BWV. 1012 (for 5 string cello)

⑬ *Prelude* 4.51
⑭ *Allemande* 6.55
⑮ *Courante* 3.44
⑯ *Sarabande* 4.31
⑰ *Gavottes 1 & 2* 2.49
⑱ *Gigue* 4.16

cello Richard Tunnicliffe

FOR THREE CENTURIES the genius of Bach has, like the beam of a great lighthouse, illuminated our musical landscape. His works have permeated our artistic culture and their language provided a lexicon for all subsequent composers. Nowadays, aided by the long view of history, we feel qualified to judge between greater and lesser creative artists. Yet we still marvel at the fact that someone who lived in such a limited geographical area, was able in one lifetime to produce so vast a range of work, in which even the smallest part now seems to capture and present universal human truths in a unique way.

Apart from educational years in Luneburg and his later, well-documented trips to Lubeck and Berlin, Bach spent all his life within a relatively small area of his native Thuringia and neighbouring Saxony. The musical establishments of court, town and church together provided employment for very many musicians, and Bach, like generations of his forebears, carried on his musical life within this milieu. His manifold activities included violinist, keyboard virtuoso on both organ and harpsichord, consultant for organ-building and tuning, teacher and of course, composer. From this secure provincial anchorage the ripples of his fame spread far and wide.

These relatively narrow confines did not however limit the enquiring nature of Bach's mind. His knowledge of and interest in the music of his contemporaries and predecessors in the German-speaking world, France and Italy was extensive and greatly influenced the way he composed. Thus he had a very clear idea of when he was composing in the 'French' or the 'Italian' style, often titling pieces accordingly but he was never bound by such stylistic conventions into producing imitations of other composers. Instead he used their music as a springboard for his own prodigious artistic

imagination, making use of elements of their style in order to forge his own uniquely potent musical language.

THE SIX *Solo Cello Suites* were written during Bach's employment as Kapellmeister to the Prince of Anhalt-Cothen. At this time, thanks to commissions for new work he was preoccupied with instrumental music of all kinds and characteristically, he came up with new ways of interpreting the accepted forms. The six *Sonatas and Partitas for Unaccompanied Violin* (BWV. 1001-6) extended and developed the German virtuoso violin tradition in works of unprecedented length and emotional scope, but the *Cello Suites* – also composed around 1720 – were, if anything, more radical.

At the time of their composition, the cello, seen by some as an upstart rival to the viola da gamba, was enjoying a rapid rise in popularity. However, it had very little solo music to its name and certainly nothing of this stature. Bach was familiar with the viola da gamba repertoire and wrote for it on occasion, but he instinctively understood and grasped the different expressive possibilities of the 'newer' instrument. (In fact cello and gamba were roughly contemporary. The bass viol had held the solo instrument field for a long time, only to be eclipsed by the cello for around 150 years.)

The idea of using a suite of dances as an instrumental form developed through the 16th and 17th centuries; the dances themselves mutating somewhat from country to country. Though Bach made use of many of the elements common to the late 17th-century suite in his own works, he characteristically combined in them a measure of organisation with a seriousness of intent which sets him apart from all other composers. The *Cello Suites* are arranged as a set in increasing order of complexity, from the relative simplicity of No. 1 to the almost violinistic level of virtuosity required

for No. 6. Each has the same outward structure: four dance-derived movements, which by Bach's time had become 'standard'. These are the *allemande*, *courante*, *sarabande* and *gigue*, supplemented by an initial *prelude* and between the final two movements a pair of 'galant' courtly dances: *menuets* for the first two suites, *bourrées* for suites 3 and 4 and *gavottes* for 5 and 6. The mood and character of each suite has a unity which is clearly set by the prelude. In addition, movements within a suite are often closely linked thematically. Thus the listener, even if unconscious of the structure, experiences the suite as a unified whole.

In keeping with the above remarks about Bach's relation to stylistic convention, we find that he treats all the movements of these suites with considerable freedom. The six *Preludes* fall into three fairly distinct types. Nos. 1-4 are improvisatory in nature, mixing ostinato-like episodes with freer material. Suite 5 opens with a prelude and fugue and No. 6 with a toccata. In general, the dance movements show a tendency to want to break the mould as the set progresses. So, in Suites 1 and 2, we find pairs of perfectly 'classical' *Minuets* whose moderate tempo and regular phrase structure could easily have been danced to. By Suite 3 the *Bourrées* have become extended; further in Suite 4. The *Gavottes* of Suites 5 and 6 are more elaborate still and are pure instrumental pieces. In each case, contrast is offered by the second dance of each pair, sometimes by a change of mode. The most striking is perhaps in Suite 4, where the second *Bourrée*, by contrast with the frenetic activity of the first, is a gentle two-part piece in measured crotchet movement strongly reminiscent of the Chorale Prelude 'Wachet Auf'.

The allemande was generally considered to be a serious, measured composition and in fact was often used as the opening movement of a suite (e.g. *D minor Partita for Solo Violin* BWV. 1004). However, the *Allemande* of Suite 3 is a much livelier piece than its companions, using little runs of quick notes and jumps across the strings within a slow tempo. The *Allemande* of Suite 6 is of another order altogether: slowed down to half the normal tempo, the piece becomes a drawn-out, meditative *'Adagio'*. The *Courantes*, with their leaping arpeggios and lively running figures are, apart from Suite 5, more akin to the Italian *corrente* (as found in Corelli) than the true French courante. They are often extravagantly virtuosic, almost approaching the *'moto perpetuo'*. *Sarabandes* in these suites are all slow, combining sensuous beauty with lofty ideas and sometimes introspection. They typically employ more chordal writing than the other movements, though a surprising exception is found in Suite 5. Here Bach presents us with a winding single line of great beauty, its yearning *appoggiatura* reminiscent of the 'Et incarnatus' section of the *B minor Mass*. The final two movements of the suites are often very virtuosic and mix in folk elements, such as bagpipe drones in the *Gigue* in Suites 2 and 3, and the second *Gavotte* in Suite 6. In the *Gigue* of Suite 4 and the second *Gavotte* of Suite 5, there is a constant triplet motion in the manner of an Irish jig.

Suite No. 5 is exceptional. It is the only true 'French' suite of the set. Interestingly, it exists in another – probably later – version for the lute (BWV. 995) which may explain its more overtly French quality, the lute being much favoured in France. Bach calls for a *'scordatura'* or re-tuning of the instrument, the top string being tuned down from A to G. It opens with what is rather like an *overture* – a stately prelude built over an 'organ pedal', followed by a lively fugue, ingeniously realised by Bach so as to involve very

little chordal playing. The rest of the suite retains this theatrical quality, especially in the grandeur of its regal *Courante*. The courante was an elaborate solo theatre dance in the French court, and was danced by Louis XIV himself. The *Gavotte* is elegant, with fully worked-out part writing, while the wistful second *Gavotte* is, by way of contrast, in a single line. The suite ends with a noble *Gigue* in dotted notes – the only piece in the suites to employ this distinctive rhythm.

Suite No. 6 takes us into yet further uncharted territory, written as it is for a five-stringed instrument, tuned CC GG D A e. This was most probably the 'viola pomposa', an instrument said to have been invented by Bach. In keeping with the smaller size and greater agility of the instrument, this suite is the most extravagantly virtuosic of the set. It has a pastoral quality – perhaps 'outdoor' would be a better word – established from the outset by the 'hunting' feel of the *Prelude*'s lilting 12/8 metre. There are also echoes of the whooping horn calls of the first *Brandenburg* concerto at the opening of this suite, and the horns return again, in party mood, for the final *Gigue*.

SOLO INSTRUMENTAL PERFORMANCE is among the most engaging forms of music. The listener shares in the communion of player and instrument and is drawn inexorably into the composer's world. Of all instruments it is perhaps the cello, whose wide range and affecting timbre is capable of tenderness, noble oratory or soul-searching introspection, which is best suited to affect this almost magical process.

In Bach's *Cello Suites*, a compelling musical argument is expressed through a language which is apparently simple but also many-layered. It consists largely of a single melodic line, a significant part of which is in fact written-out ornamentation. In this respect Bach's practice differed from that

of many of his contemporaries who would often provide just a sketch which the performer would then elaborate *ad libitum*. In playing Bach we must therefore decide which notes are ornamental and which structural, so as to offer clear 'signposts' to guide the listener through the music. He or she then, by a process of unconscious suggestion akin to word-association, supplies the harmonic context for him or herself, creating the sense of a much bigger musical picture. It is this constant two-way exchange which, over and above the undeniable surface beauty of the music, gives these compositions their enduring fascination.

Taken as a whole the suites seem to be presenting a parallel journey to our journey through life and, wholly in keeping with Bach's spiritual outlook, inviting us to aspire beyond the earthly realm. The dance – by its very nature expressive of Man's relationship to the Earth – undergoes a process of abstraction during the course of these six works. They rise quite literally from earthy simplicity, confidently expressed at the outset by the cello's resounding open G string, eventually to arrive at the rarefied heights of the final *Allemande*. In this extraordinary piece, with nearly all the notes played on the upper strings of the piccolo cello, suspended chains of silvery notes seem to show us a bridge to another world. In between these extremes, we feel, 'all human life is there'.

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Richard Tunnicliffe

Cellist and viol-player Richard Tunnicliffe has enjoyed a long and varied career at the forefront of Britain's thriving period-instrument movement, combining this with a lively involvement in 'modern' performance.

He is principal cello with The Avison Ensemble, whose performances and recordings of English string music of the 18th century are meeting with considerable success, and whose recording of the complete works of Arcangelo Corelli, released on Linn Records in 2013, commemorates the 300th anniversary of the composer's death. He is also regularly invited to be principal/continuo cello or viola da gamba soloist with major orchestras. These have included the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, with whom he has been associated since its foundation, the Boston Symphony, Frankfurt Radio S.O., City of Birmingham S.O., English National Opera, Scottish Chamber Orchestra and the London Mozart Players, and under conductors such as Haitink, Rattle, Iván Fischer, Mackerras and Elder.

He is a member of the renowned viol consort Fretwork, known worldwide for their innovative programmes which frequently include new works. Their recording of Purcell's *Fantasias* (Harmonia Mundi USA) received an award at the 2009 *Gramophone* awards, and in June 2010 they hosted a week-long series at London's Kings Place, when they premiered works by Alexander Goehr and Orlando Gough. They regularly tour in the USA and Europe, and their most recent recording, a new arrangement of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* (also for H.M.U.) was released to critical acclaim.

Richard is regularly heard as soloist and chamber musician, and his performances of Bach's *Six Cello Suites* have been admired in many countries, in venues such as London's Wigmore Hall and Purcell Room, Berlin Schauspielhaus, and the Warsaw Philharmonie, as well as countless smaller venues in Britain, Europe and Australia. He has also performed a choreographed version of the 5th Suite with dancer Elizabeth Lea.

Other recordings include the complete Cello Concerti by 18th century Durham-based composer John Garth with The Avison Ensemble, which was hailed by critics (chosen as 'Critic's Choice' by *Gramophone*, 'Concerto Recording of the Month' by *The Strad*, and twice selected as 'Drivetime CD of the Week' by *Classic FM*), a disc of early Italian music including the complete Solo Cello Music of Domenico Gabrielli, and the *Kontakion* for cello and piano (with John McCabe) by John Joubert. He has also recorded a wide range of chamber music on both cello and viola da gamba including an extensive series of Baroque sonatas with violinist Elizabeth Wallfisch, Biber's *Rosary Sonatas* with violinist Pavlo Beznosiuk, Bach and Handel's Flute Sonatas, Mozart's Flute Quartets with Lisa Beznosiuk, and Rossini's String Sonatas with soloists of the OAE. In 1992 he co-founded the Beethoven String Trio of London, recording string trios by Beethoven and also works by the late Buxton Orr: String Trio (written for BST) and two String Quartets.

He teaches Baroque and Classical cello at the Royal College of Music, London, and at CEMPR, Birmingham University, where he has given seminars and directed a performance of Bach's *St. John Passion*. He has also given master-classes/lecture-recitals at the Universities of Sheffield and Bristol, University of Delaware, The Manhattan School of Music, Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts, Sydney Conservatorium and the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

Richard Tunnicliffe would like to thank the following
who have assisted in various ways in the production of this recording:

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Cello attributed to Leonhard Maussiell, Nuremberg c.1720
5-string cello piccolo by Pierre Malahar, Bordeaux 1726
Pitch: A = 415Hz

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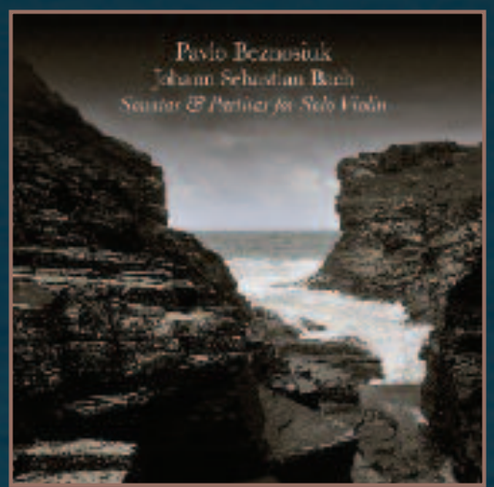

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JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)

Cello Suites

Disc 1

Suite No. 1 in G Major
BWV. 1007

①	*Prelude*	2.50
②	*Allemande*	4.11
③	*Courante*	2.47
④	*Sarabande*	3.09
⑤	*Menuets 1 & 2*	3.39
⑥	*Gigue*	1.49

Suite No. 2 in D minor
BWV. 1008

⑦	*Prelude*	4.14
⑧	*Allemande*	3.47
⑨	*Courante*	2.26
⑩	*Sarabande*	4.06
⑪	*Menuets 1 & 2*	3.14
⑫	*Gigue*	2.38

Suite No. 3 in C Major
BWV. 1009

⑬	*Prelude*	4.07
⑭	*Allemande*	3.39
⑮	*Courante*	3.06
⑯	*Sarabande*	4.49
⑰	*Bourrées 1 & 2*	3.39
⑱	*Gigue*	3.21

TOTAL TIME: 61.56

Disc 2

Suite No. 4 in E-flat Major
BWV. 1010

①	*Prelude*	4.39
②	*Allemande*	4.03
③	*Courante*	3.22
④	*Sarabande*	4.23
⑤	*Bourrées 1 & 2*	3.56
⑥	*Gigue*	2.51

Suite No. 5 in C minor
BWV. 1011

⑦	*Prelude*	6.41
⑧	*Allemande*	5.48
⑨	*Courante*	2.26
⑩	*Sarabande*	3.30
⑪	*Gavottes 1 & 2*	4.25
⑫	*Gigue*	2.22

Suite No. 6 in D Major
BWV. 1012 (for 5 string cello)

⑬	*Prelude*	4.51
⑭	*Allemande*	6.55
⑮	*Courante*	3.44
⑯	*Sarabande*	4.31
⑰	*Gavottes 1 & 2*	2.49
⑱	*Gigue*	4.16

TOTAL TIME: 75.56

Richard Tunnicliffe
cello

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