



Bach
CELLO SUITES
Inbal Megiddo

atoll

JS Bach

COMPLETE CELLO SUITES

Inbal Megiddo

Suite no. 1 in G major

Suite no. 2 in D minor

Suite no. 3 in C major

Suite no. 4 in E flat major

Suite no. 5 in C minor

Suite no. 6 in D major

Total Duration 2hr 28min

painted scroll
Aldo Parisot



Suite 1 in G major BWV 1007

19:00

1	Prelude	3:00
2	Allemande	4:52
3	Courante	2:45
4	Sarabande	3:30
5	Menuet I and II	3:09
6	Gigue	1:48

Suite 2 in D minor BWV 1008

21:30

1	Prelude	4:18
2	Allemande	4:10
3	Courante	2:19
4	Sarabande	5:09
5	Menuet I and II	2:53
6	Gigue	2:40

Suite 3 in C major BWV 1009

22:40

7	Prelude	4:09
8	Allemande	3:47
9	Courante	3:19
10	Sarabande	4:40
11	Bourrée I and II	3:38
12	Gigue	3:10

Suite 4 in E flat major BWV 1010

25:30

7	Prelude	4:00
8	Allemande	4:30
9	Courante	3:36
10	Sarabande	5:49
11	Bourrée I and II	4:57
12	Gigue	2:38

Suite 5 in C minor BWV 1011

28:50

13	Prelude	7:06
14	Allemande	7:03
15	Courante	2:17
16	Sarabande	4:58
17	Gavotte I and II	4:54
18	Gigue	2:39

Suite 6 in D major BWV 1012

30:30

13	Prelude	5:15
14	Allemande	8:22
15	Courante	3:52
16	Sarabande	4:57
17	Gavotte I and II	3:51
18	Gigue	4:14



photo as modified by David Gallo

Inbal Megiddo

Cellist Inbal Megiddo has performed as a soloist around the world, including recitals at the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, and the Staatsoper in Berlin, and concerto performances with the Berlin Symphony at the Philharmonie. Maestro Zubin Mehta describes her as "an extremely talented, very musical musician."

Megiddo began her cello studies at the age of two and gave her first performances a year later. She holds graduate and undergraduate degrees from Yale University, where she studied with and served as assistant to renowned cellist Aldo Parisot.

An avid chamber musician, Dr. Megiddo has collaborated with distinguished artists including Daniel Barenboim, Peter Oundjian, Boris Berman, Peter Frankl, Claude Frank, Jennifer Stumm, and the Tokyo String Quartet. She performed as part of Rostropovich's cello ensemble to mark the tenth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. She is a founding member of the Wellington-based Te Kōki Trio. She has held the position of principal and guest principal cellist with Orchestra Wellington, Bridgeport, Waterbury, and West Eastern Divan Symphony Orchestras. She has held faculty positions at Oberlin Conservatory of Music and Yale University and is currently Associate Professor of Cello at the New Zealand School of Music.

Megiddo is passionate about promoting and performing the music of suppressed composers, giving voice to women and minority musicians whose works have been overlooked. She has an upcoming release of works by Clara Schumann and an album of Forbidden Composers, musicians silenced by the Nazis. Her research has uncovered musical gems that have rarely, if ever, been performed.

Inbal Megiddo performs on a 1923 Giuseppe Fiorini cello.



cellist painting
Aldo Parisot

A Note on the Bach Cello Suites

While much of Bach's music is deeply associated with the church, for six years Bach served as Kapellmeister at the small Calvinist court at Köthen, where sacred music did not hold much importance. Bach was in a unique position, having the resources and the freedom to compose what he wished. It is likely that the six suites for unaccompanied cello were written during this time between 1720 and 1723.

J.S.Bach was not a cellist himself, and it is uncertain whether he wrote the Suites for a particular performer. But despite not being a cellist, his knowledge of the instrument must have been profound as he managed to create what music historian Christoph Wolff describes as "maximum effect with a minimum of instrumental tools." The baroque cello was most often relegated to providing a bass line, but with the Suites, Bach transformed the cello from accompanist to soloist, demonstrating that it could go well beyond its customary role. In the Suites, one cello alone provides the bass, dense counterpoint, refined harmonies and rich musical structure. And in doing so, Bach stretches the cellist's technique, making full use of the instrument's range and possibilities.

As Bach's original manuscripts of the Suites are lost, each performer must create her own edition based on the surviving copies: one by Anna Magdalena Bach, one by Johann Kellner, and two more anonymous copies. These copies have hardly any dynamic markings, and sloppy penmanship leaves bowing up to interpretation. While one can mourn the loss of the original manuscripts, and with them, the definitive answers, this mystery, the veil between composer and performer, is part of the magic of the Suites. Janos Starker once said that one of the pleasures

of going to heaven will be that he will finally be able to discuss with Bach himself exactly how to play the Suites. But this mystery is what gives the interpreter the sublime freedom to create, in the never-ending search for beauty and truth.

The Structure and Character of the Suites

Each of Bach's six cello suites follows the standard Baroque dance-suite structure, yet each possesses its own distinct character and technical challenges. Every suite begins with a Prelude, a free-form introduction that establishes the key and mood, followed by the Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, a pair of Galanteries (Minuets in Suites 1 and 2, Bourrées in Suites 3 and 4, and Gavottes in Suites 5 and 6), and concludes with a lively Gigue.

The first three suites (G major, D minor, and C major) were likely written for a standard four-string cello, while the fourth (E flat major) pushes the boundaries of the instrument's range. The fifth suite (C minor) calls for scordatura tuning, with the A string tuned down to G, creating darker sonorities and allowing for otherwise impossible chord combinations. The crowning sixth suite (D major) was composed for a five-string instrument (with an additional high E string), enabling Bach to explore a significantly expanded range and creating a luminous, almost celestial quality in the highest register.

These works showcase Bach's genius in implied polyphony – the suggestion of multiple voices through a single melodic line. Through carefully crafted arpeggios, strategic placement of notes, and clever voice-leading, Bach creates the illusion



dancing cello photograph
Charles Brooks

that the listener is hearing multiple instruments. This compositional technique allows the Suites to feel complete and self-contained despite being performed on a single instrument.

The Suites remained largely unknown until the early 20th century when Pablo Casals discovered an edition in a Barcelona thrift shop. After studying them for twelve years before performing them publicly, Casals brought these masterpieces into the standard repertoire, recognizing them as not merely technical exercises but profound artistic expressions.

Personal Reflections: A Journey Through Life

The Suites, to me, are a lifetime. Just as I have grown up and evolved with them, they form a complete emotional and spiritual journey that mirrors human experience. Starting from the innocence and naiveté of childhood, in the G major suite we can hear optimism, curiosity, and the exploratory steps of a child discovering the world. Simple, open harmonies and a gentle rocking motion evoke comfort and security, inviting us into this musical journey of discovery.

This progresses to the moodiness, broodiness, and internal angst of adolescence in the D minor, with the tonality perfectly capturing the turbulence of youth – the questioning, the rebellion, the depth of feeling that seems all-consuming at that age. The darker harmonies and restless rhythms speak to that universal experience of youthful struggle and self-discovery.

The C major suite is the young adult, ready to take on the world, confident, eager and full of optimism, bursting with energy and confidence. Its C major brilliance and technical display suggest someone coming into their own, feeling invincible and ready to conquer life's challenges. The ascending scale passages reach ever higher, like ambitions stretching towards the sky, embodying that singular moment in life when all seems possible.

The E flat major suite is middle age; the busy working parent, running after young children, with the occasional stop for a breath and moment of mindfulness to relish in the beauty of life. We encounter complexity, the E flat major tonality reflecting the nuanced perspective that comes with maturity. Its musical lines interweave in increasingly sophisticated ways, just as our relationships and responsibilities become more interconnected with time. Here, Bach crafts moments of both intensity and repose, mirroring the multifaceted nature of midlife.

By the time we reach the C minor suite, we are approaching old age. We look back at what we've accomplished. There is satisfaction, there is regret, there is complexity. The darkness brings us face to face with mortality and reflection. The unusual tuning creates a veiled quality, like memories seen through the filter of time. The Sarabande, with its sparse texture and profound pauses, speaks of solitude and contemplation. It is the loneliness of an empty nest or perhaps the passing of a spouse – a poignant musical space where Bach allows silence to speak as eloquently as sound.

The final, D major suite, is the beyond, the afterlife, the entire universe, with beauty, joy, and the eternal. The sixth suite transcends earthly concerns entirely. Its extended range, reaching toward heaven on that additional fifth string, creates a sense of liberation and transcendence. The jubilant D major tonality suggests

not an end but a transformation, perhaps even a glimpse of what lies beyond our mortal journey. Here, Bach's writing achieves a luminosity that seems to radiate from within, as if reaching toward divine light.

What makes these suites endlessly fascinating is how they contain multitudes of expression. On some days, I find joy even in the melancholy of the Fifth Suite; on others, I discover unexpected shadows in the sunny First. Like life itself, they reveal new facets with each return, changing as we change, growing as we grow. In this way, they become not just music to perform but companions on life's path, offering both mirror and window, reflection and vision, as we make our own journey through the movements of existence.

Bach's genius lies partly in creating music that transcends the limitations of its time and speaks to universal human experiences, while still allowing each performer's unique perspective to shine through; a reminder that these works don't belong to a single interpretive tradition but are living documents that gain richness through the multiplicity of approaches they inspire. In my constantly evolving interpretation, every day reveals new dimensions and discoveries in music that I thought I knew completely. The concept that I can know the Suites so intimately, yet each time I return to them, finding them different – this perfectly encapsulates my approach to musical interpretation. Just as every day in our lives is a mixture of the routine and the unknown, every note and phrase of the Suites is known, and yet an improvisation; the next step in life's ephemeral journey.



"Inbal Megiddo has released an excellent CD of the Bach Cello Suites. Her interpretation is enhanced by her beautiful sound and pristine intonation, and her rhythmic freedom gives an improvisatory feel to the music. I believe that this is a superior presentation of these works. I highly recommend this CD."

Aldo Parisot

Painted cello
Aldo Parisot

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