

M E T A M O R P H O S I S

Bach Cello Suites 1, 2, and 3
Zachary Carrettín, viola



Suite No. I, BWV 1007:

Prélude	[2:58]
Allemande	[5:15]
Courante	[3:03]
Sarabande	[2:50]
Menuet I & II	[3:29]
Gigue	[1:55]

Suite No. II, BWV 1008:

Prélude	[4:03]
Allemande	[3:26]
Courante	[2:28]
Sarabande	[4:27]
Menuet I & II	[3:13]
Gigue	[2:52]

Suite No. III, BWV 1009:

Prélude	[4:16]
Allemande	[4:26]
Courante	[3:29]
Sarabande	[4:14]
Bourrée I & II	[4:18]
Gigue	[3:41]

Total Time: [64:32]

Metamorphosis

Bach Cello Suites

Zachary Carrettín, viola

I chose "Metamorphosis" as the title of this album for several reasons. Having lived with these works for a quarter century, they have changed me, and I have changed along the way. During this project my dear friend of thirty-three years, and former mentor, passed away. Ken and I spent most of my first master's degree studying Bach manuscripts and first editions, and I think his influence is with me all the time. He always felt that the treatises and other primary sources were there to provide possibilities rather than to limit our scope. Our conversations went deep and wide, and included a couple of extended journeys in Europe and the United States, studying manuscripts together.

I recorded these pieces during the Covid-19 pandemic, just weeks after my uncle in Italy passed away, and my aunt in Florida passed away, and while my dear friend in Colorado was preparing himself to pass onward from this life as well. Due to Coronavirus concerns, my partner in life and music—Mina, our chihuahua Apple, and I drove thirty hours each way from Colorado to Virginia and back, not stopping at restaurants nor hotels, to make this recording at the chapel of Sono Luminus Studios.



The Cello Suites themselves are each a guide to musical (and self) transformation. The map (the notation) isn't detailed, thankfully. There's room for a wide variety of interpretations, both in the sense of the macro—tempo and breadth, and at the micro—each melodic fragment, chord voicing, and musical gesture. These pieces have transformed in our cultural consciousness since the masterful performances of Pablo Casals in the 1930's, the subsequent rise of the Early Music Movement in the last two or three decades of the 20th Century, and now, at the start of the third decade of the early 21st Century—a time when baroque performance practice is finding that all influences are valid, including contemporary ones. I think ultimately, "Metamorphosis" represents the freedom, the invitation we all have, to change, to transform, in our lives.

The viola heard on this recording was made in the 18th century. The luthier is unknown. It is set up with internal and external historical fittings—bridge, tailpiece, and bass bar—and with a set of wound gut strings made in Italy: strands of sheep intestinal lining twisted and then covered in metal winding. The bow is originally a tenor viola da gamba bow (baroque bow), made of ironwood.

Zachary Carrettín

Zachary Carrettín performs as violinist, violist, cellist da spalla, and orchestral and choral conductor. He has served as guest concertmaster with numerous baroque orchestras including Musica Angelica (Los Angeles), Ars Lyrica (Houston), and American Bach Soloists (San Francisco), and appeared as concertmaster on the GRAMMY-nominated Sono Luminus recording of Ars Lyrica performing Hasse's *Marc Antonio e Cleopatra*. A musician with diverse interests, he has served as Director of Orchestras at Sam Houston State University, guest Music Director at Eklund Opera, performed as violist in collaborations with the Tokyo String Quartet, Chanticleer, and the Assad Brothers, toured one hundred cities with Yanni and four continents with Project Bandaloop, and embarked on extensive manuscripts research periods in Italian archives, uncovering dozens of works by Giuseppe Antonio Capuzzi (1755-1818). Zachary is the Music Director of Boulder Bach Festival and **CO**mpass **R**esonance **E**nsemble.



Suite No. 1, BWV 1007

Cello Suite #1 begins with a *Prelude*, a time when musicians of the Baroque Era would typically warm up, adjusting moveable frets on plucked instruments, and centering the intonation, the sonority of the harmonies most being played. This is referential to the tradition of dancing, and therefore there is an inherent freedom in the prelude, as the musician explores the sound world from which the subsequent dances will spring forth. The next movement, *Allemande*, is an introduction to the dance, and while the title suggests a German dance (Allemagne is the French name for Germany), the prefix *alle* means "everyone." It is typically a stately dance. However, as in some other allemandes in J.S. Bach's keyboard music, I find the pulse isn't of primary importance in this movement. The wandering of melody with implied harmony travels toward and away from pivot points; these are notes or fragments that determine the harmonic turns. The lines ascend and descend freely, as if reading prose. A *Courante* follows, and this is, by definition a "running" dance, full of energy and clever wit.

The *Sarabande*, in each of Bach's six cello suites, is the emotional or spiritual epicenter of the work. Having in its form a rich history dating back centuries before Bach, there is something mystical about a sarabande when stemming from J.S. Bach's hand. He seems to use this form to express reverence, and perhaps to give the impression of stopping time. The next movements in Suite #1 are *Menuet I* and *Menuet II*. Bach writes contrasting *galanterie* movements in the suites, such that in Suite #1, the first menuet proceeds to the second and then the musician returns to the first. In so doing, there is an opportunity to examine a different shading within the *affekt* of the first menuet upon returning to it. I choose to play Menuet I in courtly fashion, Menuet II as an internal dialogue, a very personal stream-of-consciousness, and the *da capo* Menuet I as a rustic dance in the streets. This way I permit myself to interpret the map, the notation, as an exhibit of scenes including the noble court, the internal dialogue, and the spirit of communal dances in the outdoors. Finally, the playful *Gigue* ("jig") concludes the suite. Bach often utilizes this dance form in a celebratory and sometimes triumphant conclusion, evidenced in his orchestral suites and cantatas.

Suite No. 2, BWV 1008

The prelude to Suite #2 is something of a meditation. It is an exploration of harmony through broken chords (arpeggiation), turning them into melodic motifs with passing tones and scale fragments that connect the pillars of sonority, determining the structure of the work. Having played this on cello *da spalla* (shoulder cello), electric baroque violin (with unlimited reverb possibilities), on baroque viola in European chapels with stone floors and veneer, and on violin in concert halls, I have encountered a plethora of fingering options, bowing styles, and approaches to temperament. The suites in general, and this movement in particular, remind me of the *Choose-Your-Own-Adventure* novels I encountered in elementary school, wherein the reader chooses the path their character will travel. The allemande in Suite #2 is stately, mannered, and full of rhetorical dialogue, revealing the nuances within a particular affect.

The courante of Suite #2 is amazing; on the one hand it is something of a virtuoso piece and yet the melodic dialogue is remarkably sophisticated. We arrive at a sarabande, one that is composed with the breadth and old world quality we find in J.S. Bach's writing for the viola da gamba and viola d'amore in his St. Matthew and St. John Passions. This sarabande is Bach looking to the past and using an archaic sound world to express reverence for The Divine. The sense of time and space are expanded. The subsequent Menuet I is in the minor mode, followed by the major mode in the second menuet. I choose to play the *da capo* return to Menuet I plucked, in pizzicato. The gigue starts with a wedge motif. That is, the opening interval expressed in the first two notes descending is expanded in the third and fourth notes, expressing a foreboding insecurity that is immediately resolved in a cadential sixteenth note pattern. The continued conversation of this lengthy opening phrase exhibits a complexity of musical meaning within a single character and fairly simple harmonic progression.

Suite No. 3, BWV 1009

Suite #3 begins with a prelude that has a nonchalant start, a descending C Major scale. Bach then uses scales as melody to explore the harmonic pillars of this suite within an introduction. Following a cadence the real material is introduced, and in Bachian fashion the emotional nuance seems beyond the melodic simplicity and harmonic progression's straightforwardness. The prelude is large in scope, and the final phrases are striking in the chord voicing and use of silences. The allemande is charming, exploring a rhythmic motif through many harmonic permutations. The motif's musical meaning therefore changes from phrase to phrase. While I respect the integrity of a musical motif, that is, the idea that it shouldn't be altered in articulation or *rubato*, it does occur to me that a motif has its own life. As such, it may become excited or relaxed within a single phrase or overarching character. It might become reflective when the harmony changes, and then obstinate, or joyful, all within a particular affect.

The courante alternates broken chords as melody and stepwise, melodic scale fragments, in dialogue. Similar to the courante in Suite #2, the courante in Suite #3 is deceptively rich and detailed, despite its rhythmic simplicity. Bach navigates French and Italian national styles freely in the Cello Suites and also throughout the Partitas for violin, (partitas are also dance suites). Some musicians ponder over what Bach means in writing a title in Italian vs. French, (for example, "Ciaccona" rather than "Chaconne.") I'm more interested in his stylistic travels within each movement and sometimes within a particular phrase. The sarabande from Suite #3 can be seen as inherently French, or predominantly Italian. In some cases, a musical piece can be primarily French or Italian based on how it is performed.

The rhythmic structure of this sarabande is short-long within triple meter: one beat followed by a two-beat elongation. This rhythm is in contrast to the type of sarabande that consists of three beats of equal pulse, similar to a slow menuet. There are French and Italian examples of both types of sarabande, and it is perhaps reductionist to try to define a dance's national origins simply by looking at its rhythmic foundation. Even that pursuit is fraught with a multitude of complex historical factors since the dances traveled across time and across cultures. Certainly this sarabande explores the dance elements of tension and release, motion and stasis. It can be interpreted in a manner so as to express refined, poised, and detailed artifice (*artifice* as nuances in architecture, not as lacking in substance). I choose to let this sarabande speak to me in a sense of pulse and an overall timing that reflects its meaning to me.

Johann Sebastian Bach's music seems to research our innermost feelings, the subtle aspects of personal reflection on our individual and collective human experience. In his music there is a reverence for Life and Creation, and what I think is a longing to adequately paint gratitude in sound. The famous *Bourrée I* that follows is utter joy, and the *Bourrée II* is as if flipping the coin and viewing the other side, a yin and yang, offering two distinct palettes of expressive colors in the music. Finally, the gigue begins, like the prelude, with an introductory statement after which the real material is introduced. In both the first and second (repeated) sections of the dance, there is a passage that rapidly crosses strings in a rustic manner. Each time this passionate and wild section is gently brought back to reason.



Throughout the Cello Suites there is an apparent gratitude for the nuances of our human experience—expressed in musical rhetoric at the micro and macro levels. Johann Sebastian Bach's work at times expresses suffering and angst, and at other times sings and dances delight and joy. Bach always seems to be yearning to be in the presence of The Divine, and this intentionality finds its way into the musical meaning—from a joyous running dance to a reverential sarabande. Certainly these ideas have guided my relationship with the music of J.S. Bach.

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