

BRILLIANT  
CLASSICS

# J.S. BACH

Violin Sonatas & Partitas  
Cello Suites

Transcribed for harpsichord by  
Gustav Leonhardt

Roberto Loreggian *harpsichord*

## Johann Sebastian Bach 1685-1750

### Sonatas, Partitas, Suites

transcribed for harpsichord by Gustav Leonhardt

<b>Sonata in D minor</b> after Sonata for Violin in G minor BWV1001		<b>Suite in E-flat</b> after Suite for Violoncello in E-flat major BWV1010	
1. Adagio	3'37	29. Praeludium	3'52
2. Fuga allegro	4'48	30. Allemande	4'55
3. Siciliana	2'40	31. Courante	3'13
4. Presto	2'59	32. Sarabande	3'46
		33. Bourrée I	1'53
<b>Partita in E minor</b> after Partita for Violin in B minor BWV1002		34. Bourrée II	0'49
5. Allemanda	3'49	35. Bourrée I	1'34
6. Double	2'13	36. Gigue	2'57
7. Corrente	2'38		
8. Double (Presto)	3'14	<b>Suite in C minor</b> after Suite for Violoncello in C minor BWV1011	
9. Sarabande	2'21	37. Prelude	5'44
10. Double	2'06	38. Allemande	5'11
11. Tempo di Borea	2'03	39. Courante	2'10
12. Double	2'14	40. Sarabande	3'15
		41. Gavotte I	1'49
<b>Partita in G Minor</b> after Partita for Violin in D Minor BWV1004		42. Gavotte II en Rondeau	0'50
13. Allemanda	4'41	43. Gavotte I	0'58
14. Corrente	2'55	44. Gigue	2'16
15. Sarabanda	3'55		
16. Giga	4'56	<b>Suite in D</b> after Suite for Violoncello in D major BWV1012	
17. Ciaccona	13'57	45. Prelude	4'09
		46. Allemande	4'21
<b>Sonata in G</b> after Sonata for Violin in C major BWV1005		47. Courante	3'31
18. Adagio BWV968 after Sonata for Violin BWV1005	3'14	48. Sarabande	3'44
19. Fuga	9'32	49. Gavotte I	1'27
20. Largo	2'20	50. Gavotte II	1'16
21. Allegro assai	5'23	51. Gavotte I	0'45
		52. Gigue	4'05
<b>Partita in A</b> after Partita for Violin in E major BWV1006		53. Allemande in A minor after Allemande from Partita for Flute in A minor BWV1013	4'52
22. Preludio	4'23		
23. Loure	2'28	54. Sarabande in C minor after Sarabande from Suite for Lute in C minor BWV997	4'18
24. Gavotte en Rondeau	2'54		
25. Menuet I	1'03		
26. Menuet II	1'38		
27. Bourrée	1'43		
28. Gigue	2'05		

### Johann Sebastian Bach's solo compositions for the lute, violin, cello and flute *secundum* Gustav Leonhardt (1928-2012)

«Ihr Verfasser spielte sie selbst oft auf dem Clavichorde, und fügte von Harmonie so viel dazu bey, als er für nöthig befand.»

J. F. Agricola *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek*, xxiii, 2, 1775

As Skip Sempé recalls in the preface of the critical edition of Gustav Leonhardt's harpsichord transcriptions of Bach's compositions for the lute, violin, cello and flute, it was Johann Sebastian Bach himself who wrote the first keyboard transcriptions of his own music.

Self-transcriptions, which were the composer's way of meditating on his own *opus*, reveal some precious details regarding Bach's approach to performance and composition. The Bach catalogue comprises under BWV964 a keyboard transcription of the Violin Sonata BWV1003. Moreover, the *Fugue* from the Violin Sonata BWV1001 was transcribed for the organ in the Prelude and Fugue BWV539 and also in a tablature for lute (*Fugue* BWV1000), in this case with slight changes in the subject. Bach thus wrote two versions for the lute (or perhaps for the harp) of the Suite for Cello BWV1011 and of the Partita for Violin BWV1006 and the *Prelude* from the latter reappears in the first symphony of the Cantata BWV29 with concertante organ and in the first chorus of the Cantata BWV120a. Furthermore, in all likelihood Bach was in favour of playing his works for solo violin and cello on the keyboard, and was happy to play them himself since, as Jacob Adlung reported in reference to the six sonatas and partitas for solo violin *senza basso*, these «auf dem Clavier sehr wohl spielen».

Gustav Leonhardt worked on the main body of the Bach transcriptions between 1968 and 1978, in a period in which his interest gained fresh impetus from the outset of his friend Nikolaus Harnoncourt's twenty-year recording project of the Bach Cantatas with the 'Concentus Musicus' orchestra of Vienna.

The Bach transcriptions are thus central to Leonhardt's exceptional achievements as a scholar and performer, establishing him as one of the greatest harpsichordists of the 20th century. Born in s'Graveland in the north of Holland on 30 May 1928, Gustav Leonhardt first studied piano and cello, and then focused his energies on the harpsichord and organ, soon becoming one of the foremost pioneers of the rediscovery of music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He chose Vienna for his studies of conducting and musicology, making his debut there in 1950 with a harpsichord performance of *Die Kunst der Fuge* BWV1080. His achievement as a harpsichordist, scholar and animator of musical events is simply enormous. On returning to Holland, he edited the critical edition of Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck's Toccatas and Fantasias, thereby making a fundamental contribution to the rediscovery of the Dutch composer. In 1955 he founded the 'Leonhardt Consort', promoting the performance of composers who were little known at the time, such as Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber and Samuel Scheidt. Moreover, he also worked with the countertenor Alfred Deller on various important projects concerning the rediscovery of Elizabethan music. His particular relationship with J. S. Bach, expressed clearly in over a hundred recordings and in thousands of concert performances, culminated in 1968 when he actually played the part of Bach, albeit without dialogue, in Jean-Marie Straub's film *Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach*.

Leonhardt played his Bach transcriptions over the years and recorded them in a double CD comprising the Sonatas BWV1001 and 1005, the Partitas BWV1002, 1004 and 1006, and the Suite for Cello BWV1012. Siebe Henstra, author of the critical edition of the transcriptions used for this recording, recalls how Leonhardt would often refer to them when teaching, which he did for many years, encouraging his students to write their own transcriptions. This recording completes the undertaking, with the transcriptions of the Suites for Cello BWV1010 and 1011, of the *Allemanda*

BWV1013, the *Sarabanda* from Suite BWV997, and with the initial *Adagio* in the transcription attributed to J. S. Bach that completes the Sonata for Violin BWV1005.

The great harpsichordist's transcriptions derive from his particular vision of Bach's music. His models are clearly Bach's keyboard compositions and the harpsichord and organ transcriptions that he made, works that Leonhardt evidently analysed in depth and detail, going through the constructional techniques, the articulations and connections and the distinctive musical language with a fine tooth comb. In this case, although Agricola's words, quoted at the outset, actually refer to the clavichord, Leonhardt's transcriptions are clearly meant for the harpsichord, especially the two-manual model. There is ample proof of this in the transcription of the Partita for Violin BWV1006, where the hands overlap to create a dialogue of timbre, often described by Leonhardt with the terms *piano* and *forte*. In these transcriptions he fills various voids of silence and meter as well as giving life to latent harmonies. On occasions he also adds relevant secondary lines and substantial imitations, bringing out unexpressed melodies, as with the *Allemanda* from the Partita for Solo Flute BWV1013 (track 51). In other cases, he remains true to Bach's original violin part, often respecting the indications for bowing and the articulation of the keyboard score, introducing no more than a simple bass line and a few added harmonic effects, as in the *Gavotte en Rondeau* from the Partita in A major (track 24). The approach always varies in relation to the piece itself, which Leonhardt clearly analysed in depth before embarking on the transcription.

With the exception of the *Adagio* from Sonata BWV1005 and the entire *Sonata for Violin without Bass* BWV1003, which feature among the above-mentioned 18th century transcriptions attributed to J.S. Bach, Leonhardt transcribed the complete Partitas and Sonatas for solo violin. Moreover, in keeping with Bach's own approach to transcription, he also transposed them. While in the case of Bach this approach could be related to the temperament of the instrument, to the extension of the available keyboard, or to ease in fingering, in the case of Leonhardt the change of key seems to have more to do with the particular voice of the instrument and virtuoso performance.

Right from the Sonata in D minor, a transcription of the Sonata for Violin in G minor BWV1001 (tracks 1-4), Leonhardt alternates moments of faithful reproduction of Bach's score with manifestations of his own interpretative brilliance. In this way the carefully rounded counterpoint and the measured addition of harmonies in the *Adagio* (track 1) respond to the delicate handling of the lines in semiquavers that dissolve into intricate latent polyphony and a new treatment of the pedal part involving syncopation, or distribution among the voices, or reinforcement in broken formulas from the *Fugue* (track 2). The following *Siciliana* (track 3) reveals how the great harpsichordist liked to alternate filling out with pruning, such that in the *Presto* of the finale he simply returns to Bach's limpid articulation of the notes, adding a second voice to the violin line so as to create an agile two-voice gigue (track 4).

The Partita in E minor, a transcription of the Partita for Violin in B minor BWV1002 (tracks 5-12) opens with a densely polyphonic *Allemanda* that reveals a solid, four-voice structure obtained by handling the held notes with the addition of counter melodies in the contralto, tenor and bass. In the transcription of the *Double* the meticulous articulation of Bach's original line has been replaced by greater emphasis on the hidden melodies of the semiquaver *perpetuum mobile*. But then Bach himself in his self-transcriptions did not always adopt the original phrasing and bowing, as the Concerto for Keyboard BWV1058, a self-transcription of the Concerto for Violin BWV1042, clearly reveals. In the following *Double* (track 6) and the *Corrente* (track 7), where transposition down in the central keyboard section has engendered a melody played by both hands, there are certain harmonies that arise from the skilful handling of the held notes, known as over-legato. Echoes of Bach's keyboard idiom, as exemplified in the Six English Suites BWV806-811, are to be found in the *Sarabanda* (track 9) and in his *Double* (track 10), whereas the *Tempo di Borea* and the *Double* (tracks 11-12) that complete the partita are more reminiscent of his violin music.

Although various allemandas are invested with dense polyphony, the Partita in G minor, a transcription of the Partita for Violin in D minor BWV1004, opens with

an airy *Allemanda* in which the polyphony is not particularly intricate (track 13). In the *Corrente* (track 14), the vertical overlapping of the dotted and triple rhythms, which are presented horizontally in the violin partita, provides an interesting example of how Leonhardt was wont to interpret Bach's handling of counterpoint in an original manner. This way of using a given model and adding a personal touch to it is also evident in the way he adopted Bach's bowing, which adds to the delight of the following *Sarabanda* and *Gigue* (tracks 15-16). The famous *Chaconne* (track 17) completes the partita, revealing how the virtuoso brilliance of the violin score could be transferred to the keyboard by means of the addition of secondary lines that emphasize direction and the overall design of the piece in a series of imitations and passages containing stylistic elements typical of the keyboard: arpeggios in the two hands, complex chords, parallel passages in the two hands with added leaps and counter melodies. In this sense Leonhardt makes his presence felt throughout, including the improvisation-like passages. The two substantial *arpeggio* sections are developed differently, however: in the first case by means of a long series of demisemiquavers in both hands, and in the second, using arpeggios in the manner of harpsichord composers such as Jean-Philippe Rameau and Jean-Baptiste Forqueray (speaking of which, Forqueray's harpsichord compositions were transcriptions of his father Antoine's *Pièces*, originally written for string instruments).

The Sonata in G major, a transcription of the Sonata for Violin BWV1005 (tracks 19-21), opens with the complex *Fugue* (track 19). The *Adagio* already features in Bach's self-transcription BWV968, a composition of great depth despite the slight doubt surrounding its authorship (track 18). The *Largo* and the *Allegro assai* follow the same line as the *Fugue*, subtly adhering to the violin model and skilfully adapted to suit the keyboard (tracks 20-21).

In Leonhardt's Partita in A major, transcription of the Partita for Violin BWV1006 (tracks 22-28), supplementary lines are often added to the bass, likewise Bach's transcriptions for the keyboard of the Concertos BWV592-596 and BWV972-987, and thus in perfect keeping with the overall style. The *Prelude* (track 22) in Bach's

version for organ obbligato and orchestra of part of the *Sinfonia* from the Cantata BWV29 is much clearer and more linear than Leonhardt's transcription. During the course of the piece, the unison proposition of the violin melody at the start of the *Prelude* is interwoven with harmonic additions, melodic embellishments and connecting elements. In the *Loure* and the *Gavotte en Rondeau*, Leonhardt softens the use of chords in the violin and adds some fascinating counterpoint (tracks 23-24). Although in the *Minuet I* and the *Bourrée* (tracks 25 and 27), the transcription largely remains true to Bach's original with the addition of an agile *bassetto* line, in the *Minuet II* (track 26) the harpsichordist emphasizes the pedals, while in the *Gigue* completes and enriches the polyphonic developments (track 28).

The transcriptions of the Suites for Cello clearly reveal greater homogeneity deriving from skilful use of the harmonic and melodic pedals and handling of legato. This is immediately evident in the *Praeludium* of the Suite in E flat major, a transcription of the Suite BWV1010 (track 29). The tenor range and voice of the cello give Leonhardt the chance to explore the central section of the keyboard, particularly in the *Sarabanda* in this Suite (track 31), in the *Prelude* from the Suite BWV1011 (track 37), and in the *Sarabande* from the Suite BWV1012 (track 47). Thus the original key is also respected, following the practice of Jean-Baptiste Forqueray in transcribing his father's music for viola da gamba. On the other hand, for the *Allemande*, the *Sarabande*, the *Bourrée I* and the *Gigue* Bach's melody is raised an octave higher and there are melodic and harmonic additions, as well as frequent imitations (tracks 30, 32-33 and 35).

Leonhardt also wrote his own additions to the *Allemanda* from the Suite in C minor (track 38), a transcription of the Suite BWV1011, whereas the *Prelude* (track 37) and the *Courante* (track 39) reveal passages featuring parallel thirds and sixths. The original ambiguity between the compositions for cello and for keyboard is particularly evident in the *Gavotte I* (track 41), while the clarity and linearity of the *Sarabande* (track 40), the *Gavotte II en Rondeau* and the *Gigue* (tracks 42-43) contrast with the handling of the violin transcriptions featured in tracks 1-36. There are elements reminiscent of Bach's version for lute of the same suite, indicated as

BWV995, and some of his other, less dense transcriptions.

The Suite in D major, a transcription of the Suite for Cello BWV1012, comes across as a brilliant piece of keyboard skill that reveals all the deftness of Bach's composition for the piccolo cello: in the lively figurations of the *Prelude* (track 44) and in the final *Gigue* (track 50); in the intricate polyphony of the *Allemande* (track 45); and in the solidity of rhythm and chords of the *Courante* (track 46). Central to the suite are the melodious *Sarabande* and the refined and light parenthesis of the *Gavottes I* and *II* (tracks 47-49).

The collection ends with the *Sarabande* in C major from the Suite for Lute (*Lautenwerk*) BWV997 (track 52), which remains close to the original model. In fact Leonhardt's handling of Bach's material appears in all its depth in the *Allemanda* in A minor, a transcription of the *Allemanda* belonging to the Partita for Flute BWV1013 (track 51). Counter melody, legato and secondary voices all contribute to the way the *perpetuum mobile* in semiquavers on the flute gives rise to an intricate, three- and four-voice harmonic development. Here Leonhardt is more heartfelt in his handling of the material, achieving a free transcription in the final arpeggio that marries with the keyboard as it descends to the lowest A: further proof of the sublime suitability of these works for the keyboard.

Gustav Leonhardt summed up the spirit behind his heady transcriptions in the following terms: «I think that Bach would have forgiven me for the fact that I have set myself to making arrangement of his works. Whether or not he would have forgiven the way I have done it remains of course a moot point».

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Translation by Kate Singleton



The harpsichord used for this recording was made by the Italian workshop Cembali Frezzato & Di Mattia. Copy of Ruckers Antwerp 1612 Flemish school. Three registers, transposition from 440 to 415 and lute. The colours in the tones allow the performer expressiveness and dynamics. There is inlaid rosewood marquetry on the wrest plank, the base and the rosette. The geometries on the sides were painted with the intent to create a marble effect. Though the sound of the strings is somewhat French in style, to the ear it comes across as distinctive, rich in harmonics and chromatic range.



Recording: July 2018, Studio Zanottostrumenti Silvelle di Trebaseleghe (PD), Italy  
Recording engineer: Fabio Framba  
Harpsichord copy after Ruckers, Cembali Frezzato & Di Mattia 2010  
Cover: Shutterstock/Pavel L. Photo and Video  
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