



(LEMS 8066)

THE COMPLETE CLAVIER SUITES OF J.S. BACH VOLUME ONE

JOHN PAUL, LAUTENWERCK

FRENCH SUITE 1 IN D MINOR—BWV 812

ENGLISH SUITE 1 IN A MAJOR—BWV 806

PARTITA 1 IN B FLAT—BWV—825

This recording was made on a single *peau de buffle* stop from an Anden Houben double Lautenwerck. The stop is quilled in soft leather and “brushes” the string, allowing for some slight but useful difference in dynamic according to touch speed. The stop is quite soft but very resonant, and the listener should be aware that this disc was engineered to be heard at low volume—as when listening to a clavichord recording. The choice of this stop to record all of the Bach Suites was made with a desire to express them in terms of the lute. There can be little doubt that Bach, while likely having the harpsichord in mind, used harpsichord, lautenwerck and clavichord interchangeably.

The indistinct line between lute and harpsichord is illustrated by the autograph of BWV 998 (*Prelude, Fugue and Allegro in E Flat*) which states, “pour le luth o cembal.” This flexibility of medium is mirrored in Bach’s equally interchangeable use of German, French and Italian styles. He was like a sponge, thoroughly processing and absorbing everything that came to his notice. The Ordres of François Couperin and the 1701 publication of the Suites of Francis Dieupart (of which Bach made a fair copy in order to study them) led to his abundant use of the *stile brisé* (broken style), which in its turn had been incorporated into French harpsichord music from lute music. The First English Suite

(appearing in 1709) has a direct Dieupart quote and the Allemande and First Courante are perfect examples of the French Style. The Prelude, although containing the Dieupart quote, is an expressive piece of German counterpoint. The second Courante with two doubles blends the French with a string-like bass of Italian flavor. The Suite concludes with an ornate two-part contrapuntal Gigue which blends German counterpoint with a florid, Italian melodic style. Thus it can be seen that in this earliest of the great Suites, Bach was already master of all that was going on around him. So it remained through all of the English and French Suites (which are neither English in the first instance nor very French in the second) and the succeeding Partitas. Bach's genius lay in his ability to forge a unique and personal style which was the perfectly informed synthesis of the varieties of European fashion. It should be added that the influence of Italian string music, Vivaldi in particular, was greatly accelerated after receiving many Italian scores from his employer in Weimar who brought them back from his travels in 1713.

The second English Suite in A Minor, written after 1713, is all Italian string writing from the first three notes of its amazing prelude. As with his copies of French works, Bach made several keyboard transcriptions of Vivaldi's works. In this process he learned the Italian's mastery of development through continuous rhythmic patterns and the use of large Concerto/ritornello structures with their schemes and contrasts. In the French Suites of the early 1720's Bach, while again demonstrating mastery of the French Style in a few movements, seems more Italianate than ever. This process would be carried further in the Partitas which are the most Baroque and highly stylized of the Suites. The dances are often imaginative creations which seldom conform to the customary pattern. Bach changed language in his headings accordingly and often completely avoided traditional names. In the second Partita the Gigue became a Capriccio, and in the third the Minuet a Burlesca and the Gavotte a Scherzo. On the one hand Bach seems to be moving the Partitas toward the Galant Sonata, while on the other the introductory movements are ultimate examples of traditional forms. There is a Fantasia (two-part invention), a Praeludium (three-part invention), an Overture, a Symphonia and a Toccata (complete with Fugue). It is little wonder that music was never the same again after 1750. Finally it would seem that Bach himself thought very highly of his Clavier works as a body. Among the few works he had printed, they took up the most room by far!

The *D Minor French Suite BWV 812* is the most French of the set. The Allemande and Courante owe their character to François Couperin, to which Bach adds great personal soulfulness. Measure 22 of the Courante is notable for a potent double Neapolitan over an unprepared seventh in the bass. The Sarabande already starts to take on an Italian feel melodically, while the First of the Minuets uses triple counterpoint in the subtlest way. The Gigue is one of Bach's "Duple" giges, which subdivides the beat by four instead of by the usual three. In this performance I have opted for a note inégale gigue feel in three. The *First English Suite in A Major BWV 806* is referred to in the general notes. It is a stand alone piece; it was completed before 1709, at least five years before the A Minor Suite was written. Clearly, Bach wrote five more suites and used this one to complete the set of six. In my opinion, it is as fine as any other suite written by Bach. I have treated the repeats of the very French first courante to *notes inégales*, purely a personal whim. The first *Partita in B Flat BWV 825* was published in 1726 and seems decades apart from

the other suites on this disc. It manages to use triple counterpoint in the Praeludium and the *stile brisé* in the Allemande while exuding Italianate melody from every pore. A flavor of the ancient style pervades the Sarabande and Minuets then gives way to a charming yet profound Gigue with the left hand constantly crossing over a running ostinato.

-- John Paul

TRACKS

BACH SUITES ON LAUTENWERCK - VOLUME ONE

FRENCH SUITE ONE IN D MINOR—BWV 812

1. Allemande 05.04
2. Courante 02.38
3. Sarabande 02.30
4. Minuets 1 and 2 03.58
5. Gigue 3.20

ENGLISH SUITE ONE IN A MAJOR----BWV 806

6. Prelude 02.56
7. Allemande 06.16
8. Courantes 1 and 2 with Two Doubles 11.51
9. Sarabande 03.27
10. Bourrée 1 02.32
11. Bourrée 2 01.52
12. Bourrée 1 01.26
13. Gigue 03.26

PARTITA 1 IN B FLAT MAJOR-----BWV 825

14. Praeludium 01.52
15. Allemande 05.18
16. Courante 03.36
17. Sarabande 02.57
18. Minuets 1 and 2 03.36
19. Gigue 02.45

ABOUT THE ARTIST

John Paul has been organist/choirmaster at St. Andrew's Episcopal Cathedral, Jackson, Mississippi, since immigrating to the U.S. in 1965. During undergraduate study at the Royal Accademy of Music in London, his principal teachers were Alan Richardson, Harold Craxton, Eric H. Thiman, C. H. Trevor and Thurston Dart. He completed Doctoral studies at the University of Colorado in 1971. Touring as a solo harpsichordist since 1980, he has completed over 500 concerts and residencies in the Southeastern U.S. and since 1997 has collaborated with duo partner Shawn Leopard.

CREDITS

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