



(LEMS 8077)

**J.S. BACH**  
**THE COMPLETE CLAVIER SUITES**  
**VOLUME FOUR**

**John Paul, LAUTENWERCK**

English Suite 6 BWV 811

French Overture BWV 831

**THE CLAVIER SUITES OF J.S. BACH**

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 the third the *Minuet* a *Burlesca* and the *Gavotte* a *Scherzo*. On the one hand Bach seems to be moving the *Partitas* towards 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 *Ouverture*, 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!

---John Paul

**Tracks and Timings:**

English Suite 6—BWV 811

1 Prelude 09:34

2 Allemande 04:32

3 Courante 02:44

4 Sarabande et Double 06:20

5 Gavottes 1 and 2 06:26

6 Gigue 04:02

French Overture—BWV 831

7 Ouverture 13:45

8 Courante 02:34

9 Gavottes 03:56

10 Passepieds 03:40

11 Sarabande 03:36

12 Bourrees 03:16

13 Gigue 02:32

14 Echo 03:52

Total running time: One hour, eleven minutes

**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**

Recorded at St Andrew's Cathedral, Jackson Mississippi, 2010.

Edited and engineered by Tom Lowe

Graphic Design, Nick Fritsch

**Future Volumes:**

Vol. 5—English Suite 4—Bwv 809—Partita 4—Bwv 828

Vol. 6—French Suite 2—Bwv 813—English Suite 2—Bwv 807—Partita 2—Bwv 826

Vol. 7—French Suite 3—Bwv 814—English Suite 5—Bwv 810—Partita 5—

Bwv 829

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