

*Johann
Sebastian
Bach* (1685-1750)

*The Six Suites for Violoncello
Performed on Viola by
Barbara Westphal*

Disc A (50:24)

SUITE 1 IN G MAJOR (BWV 1007).....(14:17)

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|----------|--------------------|--------|
| 1 | 1 Prélude..... | (2:00) |
| 2 | 2 Allemande..... | (3:10) |
| 3 | 3 Courante..... | (2:18) |
| 4 | 4 Sarabande..... | (2:28) |
| 5 | 5 Menuet I/II..... | (2:53) |
| 6 | 6 Gigue..... | (1:38) |

SUITE 2 IN D MINOR (BWV 1008).....(16:40)

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|-----------|--------------------|--------|
| 7 | 1 Prélude..... | (2:59) |
| 8 | 2 Allemande..... | (2:41) |
| 9 | 3 Courante..... | (1:47) |
| 10 | 4 Sarabande..... | (4:07) |
| 11 | 5 Menuet I/II..... | (2:53) |
| 12 | 6 Gigue..... | (2:14) |

SUITE 3 IN C MAJOR (BWV 1009) (19:09)

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|-----------|---------------------|--------|
| 13 | 1 Prélude..... | (3:12) |
| 14 | 2 Allemande..... | (3:12) |
| 15 | 3 Courante..... | (2:47) |
| 16 | 4 Sarabande..... | (3:32) |
| 17 | 5 Bourrée I/II..... | (3:33) |
| 18 | 6 Gigue..... | (2:58) |

Disc B (68:58)

SUITE 4 IN E-FLAT MAJOR (BWV1010)(20:28)

- 1** 1 Prélude.....(3:13)
- 2** 2 Allemande.....(3:10)
- 3** 3 Courante.....(2:56)
- 4** 4 Sarabande.....(3:33)
- 5** 5 Bourrée I/II.....(4:53)
- 6** 6 Gigue.....(2:43)

SUITE 5 IN C MINOR (BWV1011).....(21:55)

- 7** 1 Prélude.....(5:26)
- 8** 2 Allemande.....(4:07)
- 9** 3 Courante.....(2:02)
- 10** 4 Sarabande.....(3:46)
- 11** 5 Gavotte I/II.....(4:32)
- 12** 6 Gigue.....(2:10)

SUITE 6 IN D MAJOR (BWV 1012).....(26:23)

- 13** 1 Prélude.....(4:51)
- 14** 2 Allemande.....(6:01)
- 15** 3 Courante.....(3:28)
- 16** 4 Sarabande.....(4:23)
- 17** 5 Gavotte I/II.....(3:51)
- 18** 6 Gigue.....(3:54)

Notes by James Buswell

It seems odd that the slightest apology need be made for the making of a new recording of the Cello Suites by J.S. Bach on a modern viola. Yet the question is bound to be raised by those maintaining that such an undertaking is not "authentic." It occurs to me that standards for historical "authenticity" are always slippery at best, and that the performer's intent and spiritual identification with the music in question is of the utmost importance.

No one at the end of the twentieth century has delved into these works more deeply than the great Dutch cellist, Anner Bylsma, and it is he who has surmised that Bach may even have originally written the Suites for the viola. It can hardly be proven one way or the other. Yet J.S. Bach was manifestly one of the most flexible of creative geniuses. When he had written a Cantata for use in the

church, set to sacred text, he thought nothing of adapting it a few years later, fitting it out with new words to celebrate the visit to his town of a secular dignitary. He was always most accommodating in using whatever bass instrument was available in the performance of one of his works, depending on who was the best available instrumentalist on that occasion—be it a violonist, a bassoonist, or perhaps, just an organist like himself. Of course it was standard procedure of the period to enjoy alternative instrumentation in the two treble lines of a trio sonata. These testimonials to the character of the composer would presumably render quibbles as to the performance of the Cello Suites on a viola bootless.

The fact that a "modern" viola is heard in these recordings is for some yet another stumbling block. Please bear in mind that the viola heard here was likely made some years before the Suites were written. In the intervening centuries, adjustments were made to the instrument to allow it to speak more clearly in a large hall. Modern strings are used that employ metallic and synthetic materials in the interest of more consistent tuning and clearer projection. That the composer would at least have been intrigued by such "modernizations" is amply evidenced by his receptivity to new techniques in the manufacture of keyboard instruments during his lifetime.

Yet after one has argued the pros and cons of different instruments used in the execution of these masterpieces, one is still left with the overriding question of the intellectual and spiritual commitment made to this music. The scholarship of the twentieth

century has left us with no manuscript in the hand of the composer, but rather with four early copies, called respectively the Anna Magdalena, the Peter Kellner, the Johann Cristoph Westphal, and the Vienna Library (copyist unknown) editions. They are all flawed, but each one has some unique illuminations. For the present recording all four of these editions have been studied with the utmost care. The palette of sounds and articulations natural to Bach's original instruments has been thoroughly digested, and faithfully reproduced on a so-called "modern" viola.

What impresses me most about these recordings, however, is the rhythmic discipline, which leads inevitably to the simplicity and directness of phrasing and rhetoric. There are no cloying nineteenth or twentieth-century mannerisms here, no tonal perfume, no kinky or cute rhythmic gestures. The dignity or earthiness of each dance is allowed to speak without affectation, but rather with a natural and elemental power. The fact of the matter is that no instrument and no performer can fully contain the richness of the spirit of Bach. The simple logic of his art and the boundless emotional vocabulary strain the limits of any instrument and provide endless challenges to every performer.

Renowned American violinist, James Buswell has had the pleasure of collaborating with Ms. Westphal in chamber music performances on both sides of the Atlantic for the past two decades. His recording of the Bach Sonatas and Partitas has been issued on the Centaur label, and his film, "The Stations of Bach," has been aired on PBS.



Internationally acclaimed violist Barbara Westphal concertizes regularly as soloist and chamber musician throughout the United States, Europe, and South America. She also appears as guest artist at international music festivals in Santa Fe, New Mexico; Sarasota, Florida; Vaasa, Finland; Schleswig-Holstein Germany; and Incontri in Terra di Siena, Italy, among many others. Ms. Westphal won the only prize for solo viola in the 1983 Munich Competition, as well as the prestigious Busch prize the same year. From 1978 to 1985, Ms. Westphal was the violist of the highly acclaimed Delos String Quartet, First Prize Winner at the 1981 International String Quartet Competition in Colmar, France. In addition to numerous international tours with the Quartet, she recorded extensively with the ensemble both on radio and disc. Barbara Westphal's recording of the Brahms Viola Sonatas with pianist Ursula Oppens was met with high critical praise, as were her complete Sonatas by Max Reger with pianist Jeffrey Swann (both on the Bridge label). In addition to her work as a soloist, Ms. Westphal is a member of the Trio da Salo (with violinist Ani Kavafian and cellist Gustav Rivinius), as well a Professor of Viola at the Musikhochschule in Lübeck, Germany. She plays a viola made in 1570 by Gasparo da Salo.

Produced and Engineered by Seiler/Schalloran
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Liner Notes: James Buswell
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Tray Photograph: Viola by Gasparo da Salo, 1570,
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For Bridge Records:
Executive Producers: David and Becky Starobin
Webmaster: Robert Starobin
Production Associates: Paul Cesarczyk, Allegra Starobin

The cover oil portrait of J.S. Bach was painted by Elias Gottlieb Haussmann in 1746 to be presented to the "Corresponding Society of Musical Sciences" on the occasion of Bach becoming a member in 1747. The society, founded in 1738 in Leipzig by Lorenz Christoph Mizler, had as it's goal to further music in theory and practice. The society's statutes called for new members to present a portrait as well as a musicological essay. Bach chose to combine the two obligations by having his "contribution to the musical sciences" put directly on the painting. However, while other new members' essays merely attested to their own abilities, Bach's study at the same time challenged the talents of the other members of the society, confronting them with a musical riddle.

Solving this riddle and understanding most of the meaning and symbolism of this little work of genius took many years beyond Bach's lifetime. In 1950 Friedrich Smend published an essay about it (Bärenreiter Verlag). When my parents, who were both ardent Bach lovers, read this they were so moved and fascinated that they did not rest until they had located the original of this portrait. With permission of the owner they had an excellent reproduction made which had a place of honor in our home. I have inherited the picture and treasure it. This recording is dedicated to the memory of my parents.

— *Barbara Westphal*

