

SONO
LUMINUS



PARTITAS

BWV 825-830

J. S. BACH

JORY VINIKOUR

HARPSICHORD

DISC 1

PARTITA NO. 1
in B-flat major
BWV 825

1. Praeludium 2:08
2. Allemande 3:49
3. Corrente 2:59
4. Sarabande 5:28
5. Menuet 1 & 2 2:59
6. 7. Giga 2:31

PARTITA NO. 2
in C minor
BWV 826

1. Sinfonia 4:27
2. Allemande 5:29
3. Courante 2:37
4. Sarabande 3:12
5. Rondeaux 1:44
6. Capriccio 3:50

Disc one time 41:14

DISC 2

PARTITA NO. 3
in A minor
BWV 827

1. Fantasia 2:45
2. Allemande 3:11
3. Corrente 3:14
4. Sarabande 3:53
5. Burlesca 2:15
6. Scherzo 1:12
7. Gigue 3:22

PARTITA NO. 4
in D major
BWV 828

1. Ouverture 6:05
2. Allemande 11:08
3. Courante 3:56
4. Aria 2:16
5. Sarabande 5:29
6. Menuet 1:28
7. Gigue 4:24

Disc two time 54:39

DISC 3

PARTITA NO. 5
in G major
BWV 829

1. Praeambulum 2:30
2. 3. Allemande 6:08
3. 4. Corrente 1:55
4. 5. Sarabande 5:23
5. 6. Tempo di Minuetto 2:02
6. 7. Passepied 1:53
7. 8. Gigue 4:09

PARTITA NO. 6
in E minor
BWV 830

1. Toccata 8:02
2. Allemande 3:15
3. Corrente 5:28
4. Air 1:32
5. Sarabande 6:57
6. Tempo di Gavotta 2:08
7. Gigue 6:19

Disc three time 57:41

JORY VINIKOUR

**PARTITAS for
HARPSICHORD
BWV 825-830**

J. S. BACH



Clavir-Übung / bestehend in / Præludien, Allemanden, Courranten, Sarabanden, Gigue, / Menuetten, und anderen Galanterien; / Denen Liebhabern zur Gemüths Ergoetzung verfertiget / von / Johann Sebastian Bach / Hochfürstl: Sächsisch Weisenfelsischen würcklichen Capellmeistern / und / Directore Chori Musici Lipsiensis. / OPUS 1 / In Verlegung des Autoris / 1731.

(Keyboard Practice, consisting of preludes, allemandes, courantes, sarabandes, gigue, minuets, and other galantries, composed for music lovers, to refresh their spirits, by Johann Sebastian Bach, Actual Capellmeister to His Highness the Prince of Anhalt-Cöthen and Directore Chori Musici Lipsiensis. Opus I. Published by the Author, 1731.)

With the above heading, Johann Sebastian Bach brought his first self-published opus to the general public. It hardly needs to be said that these six partitas are neither Bach's first works, nor even are they the first set of six suites that he is known to have composed, with the so-called English Suites composed ca. 1715, and the French Suites only slightly later. If the French suites are not especially French, and the English Suites even less English, each of these sets can be said to feature a certain homogeneity, with the French Suites each containing a fairly straightforward succession of dance movements – *allemande*, *courante*, *sarabande*, *gigue* – as established in the generations before Bach. Extra movements – *gavottes*, *airs*, *bourrées*, *menuets* – even a *polonaise* and

a *louré* – are found between the sarabande and the gigue. The English Suites follow the same suite of standard movements, but each begins with an extended fugal *prélude*.

Bach also intended to create a tonal unity in the six partitas. Using the German method of naming keys, C, D, E, F, G, H (B major), and B (B flat), we notice that only the keys of F and H are missing. However, in Bach's subsequent keyboard publication, the 2nd volume of the *Clavier Übung* (1735), the two works forming this volume, the *Concerto nach Italienischem Gusto* (BWV 971) and the *Overture nach Französischer Art* (BWV 831), provide the missing keys – F and H respectively.

The six partitas represent the apotheosis not only of Bach's

unique keyboard language, and the expressive possibilities of the harpsichord, but in the inherent range of colors and contrasts within the confines of a suite.

To a greater extent than in the other sets of suites, each of the six partitas seems to establish its own distinct character, which is developed throughout the suite. As with the English Suites, each of the partitas opens with a *prélude*. However, these movements are widely varied in form as well as in mood. Although each of the six partitas contains the standard suite movements (apart from the c minor partita, which foregoes the customary gigue in favor of a *Capriccio*), these movements show the most striking variety.

The lyrical, cantabile *Praeludium* which opens the 1st partita, in B

flat Major announces the pastoral tone of the suite. The *allemande*, with its flowing, arpeggiated 16th note figures, is followed by a rollicking, gigue-like *corrente* in 9/8 time. The pensive *sarabande* owes more than a little to the style of François Couperin, whose keyboard works Bach greatly admired. Stately, with rhythmic accents falling frequently on the 2nd beat of the measure, this is the most typical sarabande of the six partitas. The first of the *menuets* is a jolly *moto perpetuo*, alternating with the briefest of trios. The delightful, italianate *giga* – the sole occurrence amidst the partitas using this spelling – with the right hand constantly leaping over the left (if one follows Bach's notation, and not the more commonly seen tradition of left-hand-over-right), creating a dialogue between

treble and bass, while the left merely fills in the harmonic notes. This movement is one of the very rare gigue of Bach (and unique among the final movements of the partitas) which is not fugal in nature.

The partita in c minor opens with a vivid and dramatic *Sinfonia*, in three sections. The first part, with its orchestral chords, and dotted rhythms, sets a suitably tragic tone. This brief overture is followed by an andante, with the right hand playing an eloquent cantilena against the left hand's 8th note accompaniment. A short cadenza introduces the final section, an allegro fugue. The expressive and pensive *allemande* develops a graceful motivic figure of falling fourths, with much imitation between the two hands. The *courante* is in the

French tradition, in 3/2 meter. In the contemplative, two-voiced *sarabande*, the typical rhythmic characteristics of the sarabande (especially a marked second beat) are masked by running 16th notes in the right hand. The following movement, *Rondeaux*, is a brisk dance-like piece in triple meter. The final return of the theme is much embellished. In this partita, Bach exchanges the customary gigue for a *Capriccio*. The extroverted subject, with its wide leaps, is treated fugally. Bach's skill not only as a composer, but also as a keyboard virtuoso, is at the fore.

The third of these partitas, in a minor, begins with a *Fantasia*. This piece seems quite austere, especially when contrasted with the orchestral flamboyance of the opening movements of the

2nd and 4th partitas, or the tragic grandeur of the 6th partita's opening *Toccatà*. This *Fantasia* is written in two-part counterpoint, such as to be found in the *inventions*, or in the *duetti* which appear in the third volume of the *Clavier Übung*. Even in this two-part texture, Bach proves himself the uncontested master of counterpoint, treating the subject to all sorts of inversions and modulations. The *allemande* features running 32nd note figuration. Its resemblance to the *allemande* of the 6th partita may not be coincidental, as both were copied into the so-called Notebook for Anna Magdalena Bach, his second wife. The brilliant *corrente* lives up to the meaning of the word – "running," with its torrents of 16th notes. Bach expertly plays with the rhythmic underpinnings of the piece, shifting the harmonic

accents in an unaccustomed manner. Bach generally ascribes the Italian spelling, *corrente*, to pieces of this nature, reserving the French *courante* for those of a more stately nature, such as in the 2nd and 4th partitas. The atypical *sarabande* is a most surprising creation. Lacking the accented 2nd beats which identify most sarabandes, three 8th note upbeats introduce this courtly dance, with its graceful triplets. The *burlesca* is the only example of such a piece in Bach's opus. This piece has been given the title of *menuet* in its appearance in Anna Magdalena's 1725 Notebook. However, this movement, with its virtuoso figuration, is far too extroverted to satisfy itself with such a polite title! It is appropriately followed by a *Scherzo* (note that both names derive from Italian

words for “joke”). The rhythmic play obscures any predictable sense of measure, and dissonant *acciaccaturas* add spice to the accompanying chords. The concluding *gigue*, finally, fits rather more neatly with our expectations of Bach’s *gigues*. A fugue on a rather jagged triplet subject, its second half presents the subject in its inverted form.

The fourth partita opens with an *Ouverture*, resolutely in the French style, divided into two distinct sections. The brilliant overture proper features the typical dotted rhythms and *tirades* (rapid scale passages) of the Lullian overture, followed by an extended fugal section, in a cheerful 9/8. The *allemande* must count as one of the most beautiful to be found in Bach’s music. The melody unfolds



slowly, in an atmosphere of the most profound serenity, with stunning passages in *style luthé*. The ascending fanfare figures in the *courante* give it a brilliant and optimistic character. The rustic *aria* provides a jovial pause between the *courante* and the *sarabande*. The exceptional *sarabande*, alternating between arpeggiated *brisé* writing and melodic figuration, seems to float in a state of grace. The rollicking *menuet*, with its vigorous triplet figures, seems to announce the brilliant *gigue*, in 9/8 time. The subject of the *gigue*'s first half begins with an arpeggiated figure. The second half provides a new subject, which finally meets up with the original subject.

The breezy, virtuosic *praeambulum* which opens the partita in G Major announces the compar-

atively light ambiance of this suite, situated, as it is, between the grandly theatrical 4th partita, and the epic 6th partita in e minor. Here, again, Bach as a virtuoso keyboardist is apparent, with brilliant passage work shared between the two hands. The *allemande* is of a pastoral quality, with its gently rolling triplets. The *corrente*, very much in the Italian vein, is brief and brilliant. The gracious *sarabande* evokes a duo of flutes in the right hand, always harmonized in thirds or sixths. The unusual *tempo di minuetto* shows Bach at his most witty. In a *moto perpetuo* texture of continuous eighth notes, the right hand plays only single notes, on the first and fourth eighth notes of each measure, resulting in syncopated accents falling in the middle of each measure. Bach "corrects" any misunderstandings at the

cadences, with the three evenly placed quarter notes reminding the listener that he is hearing a menuet. The jolly *passepied* provides a suitable introduction to the spectacular *gigue*, one of Bach's most challenging for the performer. The subject of the second half does not resemble that of the first section. Nonetheless, Bach brings them together in a triumphant double-fugue, with a cascade of trills bringing the piece to its close.

The partita in e minor, the final suite of this set, dominates the group by its monumental scope. The opening *toccata*, the longest piece of the entire set, begins with dramatic broken arpeggio figures, alternating with melodic figures in septuplets. A more lyrical theme serves as a secondary subject in this section,

and reappears in the fugue which forms the middle section of this first movement. This fugue is itself extensively developed, and of a profoundly serious character. The opening *toccata* returns at the end, with the septuplet figuration ascending chromatically through the range of the keyboard, before the closing cadence. The *allemande* (appearing as *allemanda* in some sources), with its cascading 32nd notes, is followed by a *corrente* requiring considerable digital dexterity. This piece appears, nearly identical, as a keyboard solo movement in an early version of the sonata in G Major for violin and harpsichord (BWV 1019a). The *Air*, with characteristics of a *gavotte* or *bourée*, provides a lively diversion between the extreme virtuosity of the *corrente* and the remark-

able *sarabande*. As in the Partita in D Major, this is a rare occurrence of *corrente* (or *courante*) and *sarabande* interrupted by extraneous movements. The *sarabande* is a unique example of its kind in Bach's keyboard writing. Although the first measure shows us clearly enough the typical sarabande rhythm, with the rhythmic emphasis on the second beat, much of the writing is in a *recitativo* style, sharing more of a kinship to Bach's writing for the solo violin. The notation of the final two pieces of the set present a possible puzzle – one whose solution is not necessarily agreed upon by all performers, nor by all musicologists. Briefly, Bach's love for complex musical games, including ferociously complex canons, is no secret. No more secret was his incom-

parable knowledge of compositional traditions predating his own. Thus, the possibility of performing both this *gavotta*, as well as the *gigue* as if these movements were notated entirely in triplets can reasonably be deduced from much earlier traditions of lute tablature. Those same traditions were brought, in turn, to the keyboard suites of Johann Jakob Froberger, from whom we can find examples of giges notated in duple rhythms in one source, and in triplets in another. In this case, the *tempo di gavotta* (also appearing in BWV 1019a) presents a seeming conflict between triplets in the right hand vs. dotted rhythms in the left. In many pieces of this period, the performer is confronted with choices of whether to conform, for instance, groups of dotted

8th notes plus 16th in one hand, juxtaposed against triplets in the other. In many cases (the *corrente* of the first partita is a fine example, the final movement of the fifth Brandenburg Concerto another), the vast majority of performers would agree readily that Bach's intention was not to impose a complex (and awkward sounding) rhythmic interplay on the performer. Thus, the aforementioned groupings of dotted 8th notes followed by 16th notes are performed as quarter note followed by eighth note in a triplet grouping. The concluding *gigue* is a powerful one, the angular subject appearing in its inverted form in the second half. The time signature (basically 4/2) is noted as a circle bisected by a vertical line, unique in Bach's keyboard writing (and a possible clue as to the inter-

pretation of the piece). As with the preceding gavotte, this movement has provoked much discussion among performers and scholars alike. It is worth noting that of more than forty instrumental giges composed by Bach, only that of the e minor partita and that of the d minor French suite (a very *Frobergian* example) are composed in duple meter. The performer recommends an excellent (and entertaining) article by Amy Zanrosso, *The Baffling, Binary Gigue* (easily found with the help of any internet search engine), providing further explanation of this subject.

—Jory Vinikour

JORY VINIKOUR

Hailed as one of the most gifted harpsichordists of his generation, Chicago-born Jory Vinikour enjoys an exceptionally diversified career that encompasses performances as a soloist, chamber musician, *continuo* player, répétiteur, and accompanist. Having studied in Paris with Huguette Dreyfus and Kenneth Gilbert as a Fulbright Scholar, Jory took First Prizes in the Warsaw International Harpsichord Competition in 1993 and the Prague Spring Festival in 1994. As a concert artist, his repertoire ranges from Bach and Rameau to Poulenc and Nyman. Notable contemporary composers such as Stephen Blumberg, Frédéric Durieux, Graham Lynch, Harold Meltzer, and Patricia Morehead have composed music for Jory, and he has espoused the harpsichord music of György Ligeti and Michael Nyman. For Novello, he prepared a new edition of Cyril Scott's 1937 Harpsichord Concerto. In the concert hall, Jory has performed with leading orchestras including the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra, MDR Symphony Orchestra, Moscow Chamber Orchestra, Netherlands Chamber Orchestra, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Philharmonic of Radio-France, Rotterdam Philharmonic, and Royal Scottish National Orchestra. He has collaborated with conductors such as Stéphane Denève, Martin Haselböck, Marek Janowski, Armin Jordan (with whom he recorded Frank Martin's *Petite Symphonie Concertante*), Fabio Luisi, Marc Minkowski,

John Nelson, and Constantine Orbelian. As a répétiteur and continuo artist in Baroque and Classical opera, Jory has participated in productions at Baden-Baden (Germany), Glyndebourne, Netherlands Opera, Opéra de Paris, Madrid's Teatro Real, and the Salzburger Festspiele. He is also admired for his work in 20th-Century opera, notably Stravinsky's *Rake's Progress* and Zimmermann's *Soldaten*. Acclaimed as an accompanist for some of the world's best singers, Jory has worked extensively with celebrated artists such as David Daniels, Hélène Delavault, Vivica Genaux, Magdalena Kožená, Annick Massis, Marijana Mijanovic, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Dorothea Röschmann, Rolando Villazón, and Anne Sofie von Otter. His collaboration with Anne Sofie von Otter and lutenist Jakob Lindberg produced *Music for a While*, a program of English and Italian music of the 17th Century that was released to widespread acclaim in 2005. Jory's recordings include critically-praised accounts of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, Bach's Toccatas, and Händel's 1720 Suites for Harpsichord. A dynamic partnership with flautist Joshua Smith produced recordings of Bach's Sonatas for Flute and Harpsichord. Jory's début recording for Sono Luminus, *The Complete Harpsichord Works of Rameau* (DSL-92154), was nominated for a GRAMMY® Award in 2012.

joryvinikour.com



JORY VINIKOUR
PARTITAS for HARPSICHORD
BWV 825-830

DSL-92209

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HARPSICHORD TECHNICIAN: Barbara Wolf

HARPSICHORD: Double-manual German harpsichord by Thomas and Barbara Wolf, 1995, The Plains, Virginia, based on a single-manual instrument by Christian Vater, 1738, Hannover; FF (FF#) - e''' (a=415/440), 2 x 8', 1 x 4', coupler, buff (pictured pp. 8, 15-16)

PHOTOGRAPHY: Nuccio di Nuzzo (p. 1), Grace Eisenhauer (p. 8), Kenneth Garrett (pp. 15-16), Herрман Rosso (case back)

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