

Suite I

PRÉLUDE

$\text{♩} = 100$

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FOREWORD TO THE FOURTH EDITION

INTRODUCTION

Since the first publication of this edition of Bach's *Six Suites* in 1964, our attitude towards baroque music, and Bach's compositions in particular, has drastically changed. We have gone through the influence of the "authenticity" movement and the practice of "original" instruments. The search for sources has become a must, but, unfortunately, we still have not been able to put our hands on Bach's manuscript of the *Suites*. The same situation was true for the solo violin works in the 19th century until they miraculously reappeared in 1909. Maybe one day cellists will also have this luck and will be able to settle, once and for all, the questions which have arisen, caused by this lack of indisputable evidence.

In the meantime, editions have flourished, over 40 of them since 1964, to arrive at the staggering number of close to 100 editions of the *Suites*. One has the feeling that each editor presumes to have the answer to the enigma. What most have, though, are individual ideas of how these masterpieces should be performed. Some are based on sound scholarly research, some on actual concert practice, and others on particular idiosyncracies.

As interesting as these editions are, few use characteristics of the period. It is fascinating to see that, since the first edition of 1824, so many try to solve the secrets of the interpretation of these masterpieces which, after all these years, are still full of mysteries. So, in a way, we are in not in a much different position from when I first tackled this problem and had the immense satisfaction of uncovering the manuscripts of Kellner and "source C," which had eluded musicologists for many years.

The wish to share these finds with my colleagues prompted me to prepare this edition, which I wished to be as correct as possible, practical and dependable at the same time. I did consolidating editorial work, based on all available sources, as thoroughly and honestly as I could, to provide a more solid basis for performance. In the absence of Bach's own draft, we have these four manuscript copies (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin and Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna) to work on:

- A. Anna Magdalena Bach, Berlin Mus. ms. Bach P 269
- B. Johann Peter Kellner, Berlin Mus. ms. Bach P 804
- C. Berlin Mus. ms. Bach P 289
- D. Vienna Mus. Hs, 5007

For the fifth *Suite* we also have the very important version for the Lute, in Bach's hand (Royal Library of Belgium, Brussels: II. 4085).

ABOUT THE SOURCES

When Bach married Anna Magdalena (she was his second wife and just 20 years old), he realized the need to complement her rudimentary musical knowledge and wrote for her in 1722 the famous *Klavierbüchlein* that many young people play at the beginning of their music studies. The English musicologist Matthew Head makes a judicious comparison between this *büchlein* and the one composed for Bach's son, the 10-year-old Wilhelm Friedemann, at about the same time (JAMS 1999, vol. 52, No.2). Head says that one is made for a nonprofessional/female, and the other for a professional/male, demonstrating that at the time, a woman was not taken as seriously as a young boy. This shows, clearly enough, that Anna Magdalena was not considered a professional musician, even by her own husband. Therefore, her copy can not be accepted as a reliable reference for detailed research. She had a nice voice but was inexperienced and knew nothing about string playing. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that I have found 117 errors in her copy, not even counting the slurs which are very erratic. To my mind, her draft of 36 pages, made around 1730, can be used only in comparison with the other versions. Unfortunately it has been taken as a basis for most editions.

Unhappy with this situation, and knowing of the existence of the Kellner and Berlin Mus. ms. Bach P 289 manuscripts, I searched and found them, giving us new evidence to work on. Johann Peter Kellner (1705-1772), "unquestionably one of the most important copyists in the sources for Bach's instrumental works"¹⁹ and a

Footnotes refer to the bibliography provided on page *xii*.