



CELLO SUITES
JOACHIM EIJLANDER

BACH 2





JOACHIM EIJLANDER

Versatile musician and cellist Joachim received his training in Utrecht, Amsterdam and Berlin. As a dedicated chamber musician he has performed alongside ensembles and musicians including the Borodin quartet, the Bennewitz quartet, Lisa Larsson, Giles Apap, Charles-André Linale, Ferdinand Erblisch, Stefan Metz, Zuill Bailey, Nino Gvetadze, Paolo Giacometti, Inon Barnatan and Karl Leister. Joachim is co-founder of the international Rubens Quartet. Together with the Rubens Quartet he took the full-time course at the Nederlandse Strijkkwartet Academie (Dutch String Quartet Academy). His teachers have included members of the Amadeus Quartet, the Hagen Quartet, Stefan Metz, Elias Arizcuren, Paul Katz and Jan Hollinger. The Rubens Quartet has won awards at international competitions in Austria and the Czech Republic, and won various national and international prizes, including

the Dutch Arts Prize and the Schubert Prize in Graz.

Joachim was a regular guest in the international music festivals of Sitka (Alaska), Prussia Cove (UK), Schleswig Holstein (DE), Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (DE) and Luberon (FR). Joachim has also worked together with composers Henri Dutilleux, György Kurtág, Sofia Gubaidulina, Louis Andriessen and Joey Roukens.

Besides visiting lectureships with various Dutch conservatoires Joachim has taught as a guest teacher at Indiana University, Texas University, Kansas University, Milwaukee Conservatoire, Oklahoma University, the Ljubljana Conservatoire in Slovenia, the Dutch String Quartet Academy, and international chamber music festivals.

Joachim plays on a cello by Gaetano Chiocchi (Padua 1870) with a bow by Nikolaus Kittel (St. Petersburg 1860), made available to him with great thanks by the Nationaal Muziekinstrumenten Fonds (National Music Instrument Fund).

www.joachimeijlander.com

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750) CELLO SUITES VOL. 2

SUITE NO. 2 IN D MINOR, BWV 1008
SUITE NO. 5 IN C MINOR, BWV 1011
SUITE NO. 6 IN D MAJOR, BWV 1012

JOACHIM EIJLANDER IN CONVERSATION WITH DOMINY CLEMENTS

In volume one of this set you recorded the *First*, *Third* and *Fourth Suites*, all of which are in a major key. This has left us with an emphasis on minor keys in volume two, the often dramatic sounds of the *Second Suite* set against the darkness of the *Fifth*. Was this a conscious choice?

My choice in the order of the suites was a conscious, but not an absolute one. I enjoy playing the third suite after the first whereas the fourth is somehow a bit more remote from the two of them. The same is true for the second CD with suites 2, 5 and 6. The sixth one is even composed for another type of cello. Also, I wanted to start recording with the first suite and end with the sixth. The sixth and last of the cello suites is a new start in itself. It buzzes with youthful energy, with new depth and structural dimensions; an open end and a new beginning at the same time. Bach the inventor and researcher found a new way to compose for a melodic solo instrument in this sixth suite, creating something more developed and rich in a virtuosic way but also with a broader compositional structure. I wanted the first and the sixth to be the pillars of these CDs.

Looking closer at the minor-key suites, I do feel connection between the second and fifth: that the second suite has a dramatic but agile movement throughout, always with a bright light at its horizon. The fifth suite is also a larger composition, and with its incredible four-voice fugue is dramatic too but darker in its tuning.

The *Fifth Suite* demands a 'scordatura', re-tuning the A-string to G. This isn't such a common practice these days, so what kinds of technical issues do this throw up for you as a player?

When the player learns this fifth suite it takes time to get used to the notation. The notes on the highest string are notated one note higher than their actual sound. Once the piece is in one's ear this is no longer an issue. The choice of which string you are playing on is frequently different in this case. The issue of string crossings (with the bow, between the highest two strings) is different because the interval between the open strings is smaller; it is a more exciting game to cross or to not cross the string. The most beautiful issue is how to listen to and play with the use of open strings, being sensitive to the differences in resonance with the cello throughout the whole suite. The tuning C-G-D-G changes the whole sound of the instrument. It becomes darker but yet more resonant because of the overtones, which are perfect for the chosen key of C minor. The strings have a direct connection to the key as they are so often used as pedal notes. They also play a very important role in the voicing (of the fugue for instance) as well as in the use of harmony. But over and above its fascinating technical aspects the fifth suite, the most dramatic of all the suites, totally absorbs the player in its passion and dramatic feeling. It is a voyage of passion and mind blowing musical depth.

It has been suggested that the *Sixth Suite* was written with the smaller 'violoncello piccolo' in mind. Does the frequently higher range of the notes make this a different prospect when compared to the other suites?

To play the sixth suite on a four-stringed cello in general requires a fair amount of virtuosity and technical skill from the player, particularly in the left hand. In addition, the sound of the suite itself is brighter than the previous suites in every way. The range is bigger and the use of different registers is more varied. The structure of the piece is also larger, as if Bach takes all the time he needs to unfold the beauty of the music. Once again, all components, like new instrumental possibilities, musical depth, variety

and virtuosity, come together in this suite. When one tries to describe this suite with words one inevitably ends up with superlatives such as sublime, divine, profound or brilliant. Rostropovich called it 'a symphony for cello', and I couldn't agree more. One last addition: the beauty of simplicity! There is a simple bagpipe-like or 'draailier-like' tune in the middle of the second gavotte. The placing of this tune in the composition is fantastic, towards the end of the piece. It is as if Bach knew that he needed to keep his audience with him within the large scale of this work, granting them the gift of this delightful little moment.

We understand that Bach's music was for him a way of reaching out towards the divine. For musicians today that 'divinity' is more likely to be the feeling that they are reaching out towards the composer, that they are fulfilling the great master's intentions. Bearing in mind we can never really know what Bach would have considered an ideal performance, is it possible to keep this as a realistic aspiration with Bach as a colleague amongst musicians?

Aiming for divinity would make the suites unreachable for me as a player. Even an image of trying to reach out to the intentions of the composer would not have worked. Taken together, the suites exist as that kind of music that needs to be played and played with, spontaneously. Even a knowledge and sense of style, very important in the study process, didn't matter at the very moment of experiencing the sound in the church where we were recording. To create the atmosphere I was looking for I sensed that, while playing, I needed to go really deeply inside my own imagination and simultaneously to listen and react to the result in the space created.

While there are inevitable differences between solo musicianship and working in an ensemble, would you say your deep experience in chamber music performance and string quartet playing in particular has informed your playing of these pieces, or perhaps in the way you 'hear' the interaction of the various contrapuntal voices?

Yes! This is exactly right. I couldn't have said it better than it is written in the question. My chamber music experience has helped me tremendously in playing the suites. Playing solo, especially in a recording, has also challenged me to fully develop ideas and sound possibilities and to look for new aspects in my technique. In return this also enriches my chamber music activities. It is very exciting to be active in both disciplines.

Improvisation is an essential element in Baroque music, with the skill of the musician as much on show as that of the composer. There is of course a line to be drawn between faithfulness to Bach's text and the freedom for personal expression and virtuoso showmanship. Are these intuitive choices for you?

One of the beautiful things in playing and listening to the suites is that improvisation and strict form feel perfectly integrated. Improvisation is written out by Bach (except for instance in the last bars of the prelude of the second suite), it is always part of the structure of the 'whole' without losing its natural freedom. Playing the suites is a constant interaction between when to act to 'shape' the music and when to observe the result: the goal being that the music starts spinning around and singing by itself in the concert venue. When this happens the player almost disappears in the music (but not quite!), and the audience is more likely to be able to let themselves be transported and transcended fully at those times. This magical thing can only happen when the freedom isn't disturbed by (logical) thoughts, but in fact when 'logic' vanishes in the freedom of improvisation, creating a new world of experience and impressions altogether.

Coming back to the question, I would say that one needs to know the material (the notes, the technique, the meaning of the dances, history

etc.) the best one can, and the rest is pure intuition. One lets it happen, and it comes to life in the moment itself.

Bach's music has a real sense of inevitability without predictability. Like fractal images it is a world of infinite variety within the strictest of rules and frameworks. In many ways performing such pieces must reflect these qualities, but also means you are never finished with them. How do you find your interpretations changing over the years, and does the snapshot quality of a recording have any effect on your approach?

What a beautiful question! I couldn't agree more that within strict rules, this music breathes infinite variety. In life too, within rules, there are infinite possibilities what can happen to us and how we make choices to live it. The German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer said that life is a constant and simultaneous way between past, present and future.

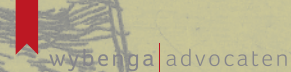
For me, Bach's suites are about life itself. They "bezingen" human life – transform it into song, with all its dreams, love, harmony, joy, grief, conflict and insecurity.

I always have the feeling that, together with finding new ways in life, I am always finding new possibilities in the suites. I feel that my approach to the suites has become lighter and clearer over the years, finding more freedom. I feel the music now flows more easily from my hands. The recording is like a picture of that flow. I recognise myself in it and the path that I'm following with the suites.





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Gaetano Chiocchi 1870

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Jasper Juinen

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Dominy Clements

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Sailing boats on a rough Sea, Anonymous,

1650 - c. 1709, etching, Rijksmuseum,

Amsterdam

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SUITE NO. 6 IN D MAJOR, BWV 1012

SUITE NO. 2 IN D MINOR, BWV 1008

1	Prelude	3.29
2	Allemande	3.43
3	Courante	2.14
4	Sarabande	3.48
5	Menuet I and II	3.12
6	Gigue	2.44

SUITE NO. 5 IN C MINOR, BWV 1011

7	Prelude	6.02
8	Allemande	5.31
9	Courante	2.11
10	Sarabande	3.45
11	Gavotte I and II	5.03
12	Gigue	2.37

SUITE NO. 6 IN D MAJOR, BWV 1012

13	Prelude	5.51
14	Allemande	6.48
15	Courante	4.21
16	Sarabande	5.21
17	Gavotte I and II	4.26
18	Gigue	4.29

total time: 75.40

