

DELPHIAN

BACH

SEAN SHIBE



BACH

JS BACH (1685–1750)

SEAN SHIBE *GUITAR*

I would like to thank all my dear friends and colleagues, notably David Watkin, John Butt, Carlisle Anderson-Frank, Allan Neave and Fred Lawton; Paolo Pegoraro for his long and generous mentorship; Laurence Dreyfus, who offered me radical ideas, zest for life and deep humanity when I most needed all of these things. Special thanks to Lady Evelyn Strasburger and Hugh Richards, who gave vital sponsorship to this project.



Recorded on 20-21 May and 17-18 December 2019
in Crichton Collegiate Church, Midlothian
Producers: Matthew Swan (tracks 1–6)
& Paul Baxter (tracks 7–14)
Engineer: Paul Baxter
24-bit digital editing: Matthew Swan
24-bit digital mastering: Paul Baxter

Design: John Christ
Booklet editor: Henry Howard
Guitar: Bert Kwakkel Merula Special, 2008
Artist photography: Iga Gozdowska
Session photography: foxbrushfilms.com
Delphian Records Ltd – Edinburgh – UK
www.delphianrecords.co.uk



@delphianrecords



@delphianrecords



@delphian_records

Lute Suite in E minor, BWV 996

1 I. Prelude	[2:29]
2 II. Allemande	[2:29]
3 III. Courante	[2:25]
4 IV. Sarabande	[3:21]
5 V. Bourrée	[1:10]
6 VI. Gigue	[2:58]

Partita in C minor, BWV 997

7 I. Prelude	[3:05]
8 II. Fugue	[5:53]
9 III. Sarabande	[4:13]
10 IV. Gigue	[2:53]
11 V. Double	[3:02]

Prelude, Fugue and Allegro in E flat major, BWV 998

12 I. Prelude	[2:57]
13 II. Fugue	[6:00]
14 III. Allegro	[3:22]

Total playing time	[46:24]
--------------------	---------

Notes on the music

Nearly three centuries since Bach's music for solo lute was composed, the four dance suites – and a handful of shorter works not based on dances – have come to be seen as particularly representative of his intimate chamber music. They were written over a thirty-year period (c.1712–42) primarily as music to be played at home among members of the Bach family and their friends and associates. They range from the youthful exuberance of the Suite in E minor, *bwv 996*, composed in Weimar when Bach, at the age of 30, was beginning to perfect the art of the dance suite, to the established maturity of the Partita in C minor, *bwv 997*, and the Prelude, Fugue and Allegro in E flat major, *bwv 998*, which may have been composed around 1740, following the visit of the famed Dresden court lutenist Sylvius Leopold Weiss to the Bach household in Leipzig.

Bach continually explored the use of old instruments such as the viola da gamba, recorder and lute. He also substituted instruments in various compositions and wrote numerous transcriptions of chamber music. David Schulenberg has written that 'Bach knew lutenists at Leipzig and owned a lute at his death, but he probably did not play the instrument with any facility.' The only tablature he used seems to have been that for organ, rather than lute. He used the lute as an obbligato and continuo

instrument, most notably in his Passion oratorios according to St John, St Matthew and St Mark, and he quoted hymns in some of his lute pieces. The lute works may also have been performed as *sonate da chiesa* during communion services (as was other music for solo instruments, such as the six cello suites, *bwv 1007–1012*). Sacred overtones are evident in all three works on this recording.

The lute suite known as *bwv 996* follows the dance suite format, standard to German composers, of Prelude, Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, Bourrée and a Gigue in binary form. By contrast, the Partita, *bwv 997* uses only two of the classical dances – Sarabande and Gigue – and includes a Prelude and Fugue, as of course does the Prelude, Fugue and Allegro in E flat major, *bwv 998*. Both late works can be regarded as free (i.e. mixed-genre) suites in the style of Handel's *Suites de pièces* of 1720 and are among Bach's finest solo instrumental works of their period. Though their date is uncertain they may well have been occasioned by the visit of Weiss and his student Johannes Kropffgans the Younger who were 'heard at our house' in 1739, according to Johann Sebastian's cousin Johann Elias Bach.

The **Lute Suite in E minor, *bwv 996*** is among the earliest of Bach's extant chamber works and his first for lute, being composed

in Weimar, perhaps c.1712–17. It exists in a manuscript copy of Bach's student Johann Tobias Krebs, with title page by Johann Gottfried Walther (1684–1748), with another copy in 1725 by another of Bach's students, Heinrich Nikolaus Gerber. A compact, entertaining piece, it has many special features. The pietist hymn *Was bist du doch, O Seele, so betrübt?* (Why art thou yet, O soul, so troubled?) is stated in the opening Prelude and elaborated in the richly embellished Sarabande. The succinct two-part Prelude – a *passaggio* in 4/4 alternating runs and chords, and a lively 3/8 fugal *presto* – has the impromptu feel of a toccata or operatic *scena*. The slow, stately Allemande in 4/4 establishes the sequence of dance movements. The succeeding two dances in 3/2 – the stately Courante and reflective Sarabande – are unusual, kaleidoscopic studies, in changes of tempo and asymmetrical form in the former and in the complex structure with harmonic and rhythmic changes in the latter. The *alla breve* Bourrée has become the most famous of Bach's lute pieces, directly influencing Paul McCartney's *Bluebird* and earlier achieving cult status in the rock group Jethro Tull's interpretation almost half a century ago. The concluding Gigue in 12/8 is a virtuoso work with contrapuntal display amid driving energy.

The **Partita in C minor, *bwv 997***, often also known as a Lute Suite, may have begun as

a partita for lute comprised of a Prelude, Sarabande and Gigue, according to the Bach scholar Robert Hill. On Hill's view the Fugue was added later and the Double to the Gigue 'even later still' with the later four- and five-movement versions as 'adaptations and expansions intended for performance on harpsichord or lute-harpsichord', dated to c.1740. For David Schulenberg, on the other hand, the 'uniformly mature style points to its having been conceived integrally, and it is Bach's strongest original lute work'. He points out that the title 'suite' does not occur in the chief sources of *bwv 997*, while 'the organization is closer to that of a *sonata da chiesa* [slow–fast–slow–fast]. Many copies survive [in various transpositions], indicating that the piece was popular.' The first two movements are a Prelude and Fugue, 'comparable in design, if not quite in dimensions' to the 'Wedge' Fugue in E minor for organ, *bwv 548*, 'pairing a ritornello-form movement in concerto style with a fugue in da capo form'. Transposed more readily to guitar in A minor, the Prelude in 4/4 has an arched symmetry of repetitive passages, followed by a magnificent, extended *da capo* 6/8 Fugue in A–B–A form, a rarity among Bach fugues, having two themes in a simultaneous double fugue. The opening of the 3/4 Sarabande recalls the closing chorus of the *St Matthew Passion*. The closing 6/8 Gigue in sophisticated French style has particular

Notes on the music

energy and expressivity, composed with similar bass patterns to those in the Prelude and complemented with a brilliant Double, giving the work a greater mirror symmetry.

The **Prelude, Fugue and Allegro in E flat major, BWV 998**, like Bach's other compositions for lute, is appropriate for either lute, harpsichord or *Lautenwerck*, the 'lute-harpsichord'. The autograph, from 1740–45, is inscribed 'Prelude pour la Luth. ò Cembal. par J. S. Bach'. The placement of a slow movement after the fugue, in the style of the Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in C major, BWV 564, suggests its possible use as a *sonata da chiesa*, according to Schulenberg. To him, 'The fugue subject is reminiscent of the chorale melody *Herr Jesu Christ, wahr'r Mensch und Gott* [Lord Jesus Christ, truly man and God] and the basis of Cantata 127'. It also has similarities to Martin Luther's Christmas song, *Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her* (From heaven above I come here). The Prelude in 12/8, with its fluid rhythmic emphasis, is related to the 9/8 Prelude No. 7 in E flat major from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book II, composed about the same time. It is an example of *style brisé* (broken chord style) perfected by French lutenists and Baroque keyboard players, using complex melodic fragments and broken chords with a strong bass line. The three-voice Fugue in 4/4 is in tripartite A–B–A form. The concluding 3/8

Allegro is typical of a Bach Gigue with long passages in two-part texture, its constant running passages, to some ears, faintly recalling the concluding Allegro of the Flute Sonata in E flat major, BWV 1031.

There is still considerable disagreement among scholars today regarding which instrument Bach preferred when performing his lute music. All four lute suites, as well as the non-dance works for lute, were written out in two-stave keyboard style rather than in tablature. Some have suggested that this shows Bach ultimately favoured the use of the lute-harpsichord or *Lautenwerck*. He may have known the instrument in Weimar, and he had one built in Leipzig around 1740 by Zacharias Hildebrandt. Two lute-harpsichords were part of Bach's estate of musical instruments in 1750.

Little was heard of this music again until the twentieth century when these works appeared in guitar arrangements first by Francisco Tárrega (1852–1909) and then Andrés Segovia (1893–1987), which as well as bringing these pieces to wide audiences, also began to pave the way for the revival of the Baroque lute as an instrument. At the same time, however, as Nicholas Kenyon writes in the *Bach 333 New Complete Edition*, the organists Herbert Tappert and Albert Schweitzer 'maintained that most of these

suites are keyboard versions of real lute works'. While today's most prevalent theory among scholars is that Bach composed at least the later works for lute-harpsichord, as Kenyon says, many still feel that 'the most satisfying performing instrument today for these works is the guitar'.

Bach obviously relished the opportunity to recast a piece of music for a particular instrument in a new version for another. His genius lay in the original melody and harmony, which seemed idiomatic for that particular instrument, but which were assimilated into their new contexts with changes made only in interpretative factors such as phrasing, embellishments and dynamic adjustments. At the same time, Bach's continual experimentation with multiple musical forms achieved another seeming paradox in his music with its sense of unity through diversity; while in his quotation of chorale melodies he brought a sacred perspective into these seemingly secular works.

© 2020 William L. Hoffman

William L. Hoffman is the discussion leader, Bach Cantatas Website, and is pursuing a doctorate in historical musicology, his dissertation entitled 'Bach's Lost Pentecost Oratorio and the Leipzig Reformation Jubilee, 1739'.

Biography

One of the foremost guitarists of his generation, **Sean Shibe** brings a fresh and innovative approach to the traditional classical guitar by experimenting with instruments and repertoire.

The first guitarist to be chosen for BBC Radio 3's New Generation Artists scheme, he was then selected for representation by the Young Classical Artists Trust between 2015 and 2017. His debut album *Dreams & Fancies*, released on Delphian in 2017 (DCD34193), was nominated in the 'Instrumental' category at the 2018 *BBC Music Magazine* Awards. In the same year, Shibe became the first guitarist to receive the coveted Royal Philharmonic Society Award for Young Artists; and in 2019, he won a Gramophone Award in the newly created 'Concept Album' category for his critically acclaimed recording *softLOUD* (Delphian DCD34213).

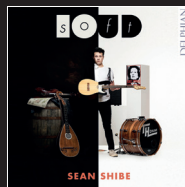
Sean Shibe's commitment to expanding the repertoire for his instrument sees him conceive imaginative programmes, heavily featuring new music; recent and future performances include pieces by James MacMillan, Daniel Kidane, Brian Bolger, David Fennessy, Sofia Gubaidulina, and the premiere of a reworked version of Georges Lentz's *Ingwe*, in collaboration with the composer himself. New commissions include Mark Simpson, David Fennessy,

Freya Waley-Cohen, young Welsh composer Sylvia Villa, and Liam Paterson – in spring 2020 Shibe joins fellow Delphian artists The Choir of King's College London and their director Joseph Fort to record a major new Rilke setting by Paterson, for choir with guitar.

2019/20 highlights include recitals at Wigmore Hall and Southbank Centre in London, MITO SettembreMusica festival (Milan/Turin), the Liszt Academy in Budapest, and Serefiye Cistern Concerts series in Istanbul. Shibe has performed at internationally renowned venues and festivals including Alte Oper Frankfurt, Heidelberger Frühling, Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Mosel Musik Festival, Musashino Hall in Tokyo, and the Bath, Lammerrmuir, East Neuk and Aldeburgh festivals. He returned to the Marlboro Summer Music Festival on the invitation of Mitsuko Uchida, and has toured China extensively.

Born in Edinburgh in 1992 of English and Japanese heritage, Sean Shibe studied at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and with Paolo Pegoraro in Italy. He is a D'Addario Endorsee, and performs on these strings exclusively.

Also available on Delphian



Dreams & Fancies: English music for solo guitar

Sean Shibe
DCD34193

Barely half a century ago, the guitar was such a rarity in the concert hall that even an outstanding player like Julian Bream was remarkable as a pioneer as much as for his exceptional technique and musicality. Today, by contrast, the field is richly populated – thanks not only to Bream's own inspiring example to younger players but also to the vastly increased repertoire, so much of which he also instigated.

Yet even in this new heyday for the instrument, Sean Shibe – whose full album debut here nests among four of those Bream-commissioned works a clutch of Dowland pieces from a previous Elizabethan Golden Age – stands out as a truly uncommon talent. 'I want to hear his interpretation of Britten's *Nocturnal* over and over,' wrote David Nice in an awed recent concert review. 'This, for me, is the definitive performance.'

softLOUD: music for acoustic & electric guitars

Sean Shibe
DCD34213

Shibe's second Delphian outing is a programme of radical contrasts that showcases virtuosity at both extremes. Where *Dreams & Fancies* paid homage to the guitar repertoire created by his great predecessor Julian Bream, *softLOUD* is a mix of electric and acoustic, early and modern, whose contradictions and challenges speak to our own times. The gentle beauty of Scottish lute manuscripts and of two short instrumental solos by James MacMillan is confronted by, and holds its own against, music by New York-based composers Steve Reich (a breathtaking new recording of the now-classic *Electric Counterpoint*), Julia Wolfe – a work of cathartic grief and anger originally scored for nine bagpipes – and David Lang, whose electric violin work *Killer* is iron-clad in its abrupt fury.

'Sean Shibe has made one of the best recordings of *Electric Counterpoint* ever ... I couldn't take my headphones off' — Steve Reich

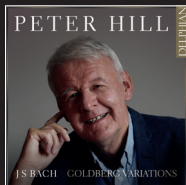


J.S. Bach: Suites for Solo Cello

Philip Higham
DCD34150 (2 discs)

Philip Higham's debut recording, of Britten's three solo cello suites, won editor's choice accolades from both *Gramophone* and *BBC Music Magazine*. Now he takes on the Bach suites which were Britten's inspiration, and which remain pinnacles of the repertoire for any cellist. Not afraid to question received wisdom, Higham's thoughtful yet daring approach leads him to combine elements of period and modern style both in his playing and in his choice of instruments – a 1697 cello for the first five suites and a 2013 five-string instrument to bring out the extraordinary range of colours with which Bach invested the crowning Sixth.

'The character he finds throughout this music is consistently revealing ... unpretentious depths and organic, naturalistic flow: the highest possible recommendation' — The Herald, August 2015



J.S. Bach: Goldberg Variations

Peter Hill *piano*
DCD34200

In the *Goldberg Variations* Bach answered a modest request – from an aristocratic patron who wanted music that was 'soft and somewhat lively' as a distraction from insomnia – with a work of immense scale and ambition, a great musical journey that traverses a dazzling kaleidoscope of musical styles. The music's wit and virtuosity is matched by the exquisite contrapuntal tracery of the canons that form the work's backbone, and by the tragic grandeur of the minor-key variations, which contain some of the most poignant music Bach ever wrote. Peter Hill continues his acclaimed series of Bach recordings for Delphian with a searchingly imaginative performance, capturing the music's zest and its depth of feeling in a reading that is as profoundly poetic as it is beautifully coloured.

'an honesty and intelligence that earns [Hill] his place at the top of the table' — BBC Music Magazine, May 2018



Gaspar Sanz (c.1640–c.1710): La Preciosa

Gordon Ferries
DCD34036

Gordon Ferries visits the music of seventeenth-century Spain's fiery streets. It was a time when the five-course guitar engendered a sense of abject horror in the morally inclined on account of its associations with popular ballads, taverns, criminality, sensuality and in particular with dancing. Ferries evokes the period with panache and breathtakingly virtuosic flair.

'Sanz's music exudes Spanish fire from every pore, and it is this exotic but nebulous quality that Ferries captures to perfection' — Early Music Review, December 2005

'Ferries achieves an astonishing array of moods and emotions ... at once crisp, stylish, and fun. This is a disc to listen to again and again' — Early Music America, Spring 2006



François Couperin: La Paix du Parnasse

John Kitchen, Lucy Carolan
DCD34012

Though much of Couperin's harpsichord music was written for a solo instrument, he composed a small number of pieces for two harpsichords, somewhat in the manner of a trio sonata. Lucy Carolan and John Kitchen pair their considerable talents on two of the world's most exquisite original French instruments, the 1769 Pascal Taskin and the 1764/83 Goermans/Taskin double-manual instruments in the Russell Collection of Early Keyboard Instruments.

'Carolan's ornamentation in the solo pieces is exquisitely subtle, the rhetoric and the pacing of "La Distraite" masterful, and the registration in "Le Rossignol" throws the birdsong into clear relief. The rapport between Carolan and Kitchen is sure, and never more so than in the Air (track 25) and Lentement (track 29) of the quartet "La Steinquerque"' — Gramophone, February 2004

