Mp3 Tobias Werner - J.s. Bach: Suites No.1, 3, 4

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Fascinating new interpretation of the Bach Cello Suites by Cellist Tobias Werner 18 MP3 Songs CLASSICAL: Traditional, EASY LISTENING: Mood Music Details: "...Pablo Casals is said to have remarked that each of Bach's six cello suites takes its tone from its prelude, and Werner has chosen ones here that Casals called optimistic, heroic, and grandiose. Whatever you call them, they are examples of Bach's poetic beauty, and Werner... plays them with verve, and makes one long for another CD with the other three suites". Taylor McNeil, Bostonia The Bach Cello Suites We don't know many historical facts that might shed light on the composition of Bach's six suites for unaccompanied violoncello. Like the six solo violin sonatas and partitas which preceded them, they were written in 1720 while Bach was employed as the capellmeister for Prince Leopold in Cthen. But, again like the violin works, no evidence exists that they were written for a special occasion, or to curry princely favor, or for a particular performer (although his 19th-century biographer Philipp Spitta opines that they may have been written with the virtuoso gambist Carl Friedrich Abel in mind). It is quite likely that these works were never played publicly during Bach's lifetime. Indeed, these suites would not have survived at all were it not for Bach's second wife, Anna Magdalena, who made a fair copy of them from the original manuscripts. But then, who did play them originally? And why were they written at all? While we can't answer either question with certainty, we can make some interesting conjectures. As to the first question, we might suggest that Bach himself played these pieces, perhaps in the circle of his family and friends. But Bach-the-performer was most renowned as a virtuoso organist. Is it even possible that he had the facility to perform these technically difficult string pieces himself? In a letter to Bach's first biographer, J.N. Forkel, Bach's son Carl Philipp Emanuel wrote: As the greatest expert and judge of harmony, he liked best to play the viola, with appropriate loudness and softness. In his youth, and until the approach of old age, he played the violin

cleanly and penetratingly, and thus kept the orchestra in better order than he could have done with the harpsichord. He understood to perfection the possibilities of all stringed instruments. This is evidenced by his solos for the violin and for the violoncello without bass. So it is certainly possible that Bach himself was the first to play these violin and cello pieces. But why he wrote them is the more tantalizing question. His first wife, Maria Barbara, died in the early summer of 1720. Bach was a deeply religious man, and his religiosity would undoubtedly have resulted in an inward turn to his God for solace in a time of grief. During this period of sorrow (not the first and not to be the last), Bach likely would have affirmed the words of another Lutheran, Sren Kierkegaard, who wrote more than a century later, "If you have never been solitary, you have also never discovered that God exists" - a kind of religiosity and internal communion almost impossible to fathom in our own present age. But again, the keyboard was Bach's primary performance domain. If he wished a musical contemplation in solitude, for whatever reason, why wouldn't he compose a series of solo works for organ or harpsichord where his greatest proficiency lay? One answer may be that, before anything else, Bach was a composer. And what this means (to any serious artist, not just Bach) is that there is an ever-present need - even (or especially) in the midst of grief - to find and overcome technical and aesthetic challenges. Where these challenges might come from is suggested by Forkel: [Bach] labored for himself, like every true genius; he fulfilled his own wish, satisfied his own taste, chose his subjects according to his own opinions, and, lastly, derived the most pleasure from his own approbation. ... How else could a real work of art be produced? ... [Bach] thought the artist could form the public, but the public could not form the artist. Above all, genius feeds on challenges that come from within, but how? What could possibly challenge a Johann Sebastian Bach who, at age 35, was so adept at his art that he could compose a cantata or a four-voice fugue faster than he could write the notes? Where is the challenge in doing something one barely has to think about? One solution might be this: find something that you yourself have never tried before - even better if this is something that others have tried but with limited success. Strictly speaking, Bach never "invented" anything from scratch. Many other composers before him had written works for unaccompanied stringed instruments - Balzer, Matteis, Schmelzer, Biber, Walther. Undoubtedly Bach heard some of these solo works. The idea (and the challenge) for these composers was, not to devise unaccompanied melodies for a primarily solo-voice instrument, but to give the impression that the solo instrument was playing many voices at once. Polyphonic writing was the gold standard of the Baroque. There are essentially only two

ways of creating polyphony on a solo violin or cello - one can play two or more strings at once ("double-" or "triple-stopping") or in arpeggiation (as broken chords) or one can apply a compositional technique which in German is called "Durchfhrung" (the "leading through" or, more loosely, the "spinning out," of a musical idea). This latter technique (more properly, a whole bag of compositional tricks) seems to have originated in the exposition section of fugues and later found important applications in the development section of the sonata form. An example is found in the opening prelude of the G-Major Cello Suite, performed with such sensitivity on this recording by Tobias Werner. In the first eight notes, a musical novice would see no more than the beginning of a "tune" - one note following another. A composer, however, sees something more: 2 notes plus 2 notes plus 4 notes - and this is only one of many ways to parse this brief 8-note idea compositionally. As the music continues, Durchfhrung carries us along: pairs split, chunks of notes break away, regroup and rejoin the others with new but related material, and on and on - digressing and subdigressing, at times leagues away from the initial 8-note musical premise. It's as if one were being led through a tremendously complex maze where everything is comfortably the same and startlingly different at every turn. Then suddenly but inevitably, Bach pulls the entire complexity together in a final cadence, and everything becomes clear. Here is why it is literally impossible to exhaust the ways to hear (and to perform) Bach's music. One can begin by taking one of these paths through the maze. At each ensuing moment the listener has a choice to continue the same path or follow one of the intersecting paths, and then another choice is made and another. There are no dead ends. The next time through, the ear may make different choices - on the surface the number of paths to follow through the music is nearly uncountable. Here also was Bach's personal challenge in 1720. In a sense it was more of a technical than a purely musical challenge for him. In the Baroque it was expected that any composer could easily write polyphonically for two or more voices or instruments. But in order to do this for an unaccompanied voice other than a keyboard instrument, previous composers had to relax the strict requirements of polyphony. They couldn't figure out how one voice could keep two or more going throughout an entire piece. (Even a master such as Handel occasionally dropped voices in his fugal writing.) But Bach was arguably the first to meet the rigorous polyphonic requirement thoroughly for a single-voice instrument. And he did this in a rich variety of ways in every movement of all six cello suites. Like Bach's contemporaries, we are finally left smiling and shaking our heads in awe - the kind of awe expressed by no less than Beethoven ... "Not Bach (brook), but Meer (sea) should be his name." Stephen

Soderberg, Music Division, Library of Congress Tobias Werner, Cello, has been cellist at the Garth Newel Music Center since 1999, and performs more than 50 concerts each year with the Garth Newel Piano Quartet. Concerts have taken him throughout the US, New Zealand, France, Spain, Germany, Ireland, and Italy. Recent performances include concerts at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall, the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C., and at Strathmore Hall. Tobi performed at such festivals as the Cape and Islands Chamber Music Festival, Open Chamber Music Trossingen, Villa Musica Mainz, the San Diego Chamber Music Workshop, the Oberstdorfer Musiksommer Festival, and the Vail Valley Bravo! Colorado Music Festival. He has appeared as soloist with orchestras in the US, France, Germany, and Romania, and recent performances have included the concertos of Dvok, Elgar, Haydn, and Boccherini. He has recorded on the ECM, Darbringhaus Grimm, Bayer Records, and Orfeo labels. Recent CD releases include Piano Quartets by Mozart, Brahms, Dvorak, and Martinu with the Garth Newel Piano Quartet, as well as the Suites for Unaccompanied Cello by J.S. Bach. Tobi studied at the Musikhochschule Freiburg, Germany, and at Boston University. His teachers include Andrs Daz, Christoph Henkel, and Xavier Gagnepain.