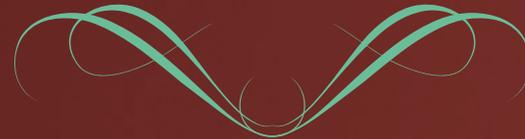


SIMAX
classics

J.S. Bach
THE ENGLISH SUITES
BWV 806-811

Ketil Haugsand, harpsichord



JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685 - 1750)

Die Englische Suiten - The English Suites - Les Suites Anglois - BWV 806 - 811

CD N^o. one

First Suite, A Major, BWV 806	28:32
01 – Prélude	02:23
02 – Allemande	06:39
03 – 1e Courante	01:50
04 – 2e Courante, avec deux doubles	06:46
05 – Sarabande	04:17
06 – Bourrée I & II	03:26
07 – Gigue	03:11
Second Suite, A Minor, BWV 807	21:05
08 – Prélude	05:56
09 – Allemande	04:58
10 – Courante	01:54
11 – Sarabande	03:20
12 – Bourrée I & II	04:05
13 – Gigue	02:52
Third Suite, G Minor, BWV 808	20:59
14 – Prélude	03:47
15 – Allemande	04:58
16 – Courante	02:28
17 – Sarabande	03:27
18 – Gavotte I - Gavotte II, ou la Musette	03:07
19 – Gigue	03:12



CD N^o. two

Fourth Suite, F Major, BWV 809	21:59
01 - Prélude – vitement 05:45	
02 – Allemande 04:13	
03 – Courante 01:42	
04 – Sarabande 03:08	
05 – Minuet I & II 03:28	
06 – Gigue 03:44	
Fifth Suite, E Minor, BWV 810	23:29
07 – Prélude 06:08	
08 – Allemande 04:49	
09 – Courante 02:28	
10 – Sarabande 02:59	
11 – Passepied en Rondeau & Passepied II 03:38	
12 – Gigue 03:27	
Sixth Suite, D Minor, BWV 811	31:51
13 – Prélude – vitement 09:47	
14 – Allemande 05:17	
15 – Courante 02:39	
16 – Sarabande avec Double 05:44	
17 – Gavotte I & II 04:33	
18 – Gigue 03:51	

KETIL HAUGSAND, HARPSICHORD

Double Manual Harpsichord in German Style
by Martin Skowroneck, Bremen, 1985

“Six great Suites, consisting of preludes, allemandes, courants, sarabandes, jigs &c. They are known by the name of the English suites because the composer made them for an Englishman of rank.”

J. N. Forkel, 1802 on Bach's Life and Works

THE SIX ENGLISH SUITES, BWV 806 – 811

by Peter Watchorn

The origin of the title of J. S. Bach's *English Suites*, written in a mixture of French and Italian styles remains mysterious to this day. Forkel's explanation, based largely on information which he received from Bach's sons, Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philipp Emanuel, suggests the likely use of the title *English Suites* among members of Bach's circle of family and students. In most surviving copies from the first half of the eighteenth century, the name given is simply suites *avec préludes*. No autograph manuscript survives to shed further light, however a copy once in the possession of Bach's youngest son, Johann Christian refers to the first suite as "Suite 1 avec Prelude pour le clavecin. A#. composée. par. Jean Sebastian Bach. Fait par les Anglois. pp Jean Chretien Bach".

Considerable evidence suggests that, whatever the significance of their title, the *English Suites* constituted Bach's first major essay in systematically

composing keyboard suites. In all likelihood we must return to the Weimar years (1708-1714) in order to discover their origins. Around 1713, Bach's compositional style, hitherto the product of largely indigenous influences, underwent a dramatic transformation. For it was in this year that Bach's patron, the youthful and musically precocious Duke Johann Ernst of Weimar returned from one of his European tours, bringing with him a bundle of published compositions by leading Italian composers, including Vivaldi's Op. 3 concertos, *L'Estro Armonico*. A few years previously, the young Duke had acquired the six *suites pour le clavessin* by a French composer, Francis Dieupart, who had lived in London since the early 1700's. Bach's admiration for the music of Vivaldi is so completely documented that it requires little comment here. According to Forkel, Bach's acquaintance with this music was the catalyst which led the composer to re-organize his compositional style completely. Less well-known, however, is the extent of Bach's interest in and regard for French harpsichord music. To further his knowledge of the French style of composition, Bach copied out all six of Dieupart's suites for his own use. While no autograph of the *English Suites* survives, Bach's copy of Dieupart's collection, the most likely model for the *English Suites*, is extant. An early version of the first English Suite (BWV 806a), probably already in existence by 1710, was perhaps the first concrete result of Bach's exhaustive study of the Dieupart suites.

The remaining five English Suites, produced soon after the watershed year of 1713, unite Italianate

concertante-style preludes with combinations of French and Italian-style dances, as well as indigenous German counterpoint. The dates of the surviving manuscript sources as well as obvious stylistic discrepancies strongly suggest that Bach conceived the first English Suite (entitled, in the first known version as *Prelude avec les suites*) before the other five as a straightforward exercise in composing French dance music, introduced by a “German”-style contrapuntal prelude. Not only does the first suite survive in a more rudimentary version (preserved in a manuscript collection compiled by Bach’s distant relative, Johann Gottfried Walther from around 1712), but its *prélude* opens with a direct quotation of the first eleven measures of the *gigue* from Dieupart’s suite in A major. The likely period of their composition, 1710-1717, makes it apparent that the *English Suites* represent the first fruit of Bach’s interest in an idea which passionately concerned some of the leading figures in European music of the early 18th century - the fusion of elements from both French and Italian composition to produce a style of music which was greater than the sum of its parts, termed *les goûts réunis* by Bach’s great near-contemporary and, perhaps, correspondent, François Couperin.

Distinguishing Dieupart’s compositions (published in Amsterdam in 1701) from most French suites dating from the turn of the century was his use of an unvarying sequence of movements throughout the collection. Quite distinct from the improvisatory *prélude non mesurée* of D’Anglebert, Louis Couperin and others were Dieupart’s fully written-out overtures. For the *English Suites*, Bach employed Italian concerto-style preludes to serve the same

function. That the last five suites (and certainly the preludes which form their nuclei) were conceived from the outset as a tonally ordered collection is clear from the key sequence of BWV 807-11: a, g, F, e, d. The earlier A major suite, since its tonality excludes it from this plan, was perhaps simply appended with additions and minor corrections in order to complete the set of six.

It seems certain that the *English Suites* were composed before the six *French Suites* (BWV 812-17), and the *Partitas* (BWV 825-30) which form the first part of the *Clavierübung*. They appear in none of the collections which Bach compiled for his second wife, Anna Magdalena, in 1722 and 1725, whereas suites from the other sets are often featured. Their absence from these “family scrapbooks”, as well as the lack of any surviving autograph, perhaps strengthens the theory that the *English Suites* originally served to fulfill a commission, Bach’s fair copy presumably also having served as the presentation score. That Bach and his circle highly esteemed these works is supported by the survival of more contemporary copies of them than of any other of Bach’s harpsichord suites. What is perhaps the most generally reliable version was produced between 1719 and 1725 by Bach’s student and eventual Leipzig associate, Johann Schneider, known to Bach scholarship as Anonymous 5. That Bach himself supervised the production of this copy is revealed by his insertion of seven measures in BWV 808/i. Indeed, so similar is Schneider’s handwriting to the composer’s own, that Bach scholarship in the earlier part of the twentieth century regarded his manuscript as a genuine Bach autograph.

The evidence suggests that the *English Suites*, far from representing Bach's last word on the genre of the keyboard suite (a view held by pioneering Bach authorities such as Sir Hubert Parry and Albert Schweitzer), should instead conjure up for us an image of a youthful and inquisitive composer, vitally concerned with assimilating and reshaping various national compositional styles into a grand synthesis - a preoccupation which continued throughout the rest of his career. Using the known facts as starting points for reconstructing the origins of the suites, one might imagine the following sequence of events:

Between 1709 and 1714, the increasingly well-known Johann Sebastian Bach, court musician and organist in Weimar, and overflowing with curiosity about the fashionable French style of composition for the harpsichord, copies out all six suites of a leading London-based French composer, Francis Dieupart. The published manuscript has been acquired by his patron, Duke Johann Ernst during one of his educational excursions around Europe. While making a copy, Bach includes the table of ornaments from another French composer, Jean Henry D'Anglebert, and at the same time copies the Premier Livre d'Orgue of yet another well-known French composer, Nicholas de Grigny. He then composes a suite of his own in a similar style (BWV 806a, the early version of BWV 806), using the basic format and key signature of one of Dieupart's suites. In homage to the author of his model, he quotes the first half of Dieupart's gigue as part of the opening of his own prélude, although in the process he greatly expands the piece, transforming a simple two-part jig into complex four-part counterpoint. His distant cousin and colleague, J. G. Walther, also employed at the time at the ducal court in Weimar is at work compiling a vast manuscript

collection of musical examples which, twenty years later he will use as source material for his famous Musikalisches Lexicon. He copies out both the Dieupart suite and Bach's example, which the French work has inspired. The two suites are juxtaposed in Walther's manuscript in order to enable the reader to make a direct comparison of French and German art.

Around 1717, in the wake of the increased diplomatic exchanges between England and the German states associated with the accession of the Elector of Hannover as England's King George I, Bach receives a commission from a visiting English nobleman who knows and admires the suites of the London-based Dieupart, and requests from Bach a set modelled on the earlier works. As introductory préludes, Bach uses a set of five concerto movements, which he has composed in the wake of his revelatory 1713 discovery of concertos by Vivaldi, Marcello and other Italian composers. To compile a collection of suites, once again using Dieupart's set as the basic model; he attaches to his préludes a consistent sequence of French dances, often combining elements of the two contrasting national styles within a single movement. In this regard, Bach is consciously following in the footsteps of François Couperin whose music he greatly respects. Finally, in order to complete the commission, he presses into service the A major suite (BWV 806a), composed a few years before. In the course of re-copying the work, he adds a few bars to the prélude to improve its harmonic rhythm, at the same time both streamlining and enhancing the sequence of dances. He adds a variant to one of the courantes and also a second bourrée, to be performed alternativement with the existing one to bring the suite into line with the later, more fashionable works. He adorns some of the sarabandes with French agréments, following the examples to be found in Couperin's Premier Livre de Pièces de Clavecin. The

autograph manuscript is presented to his noble patron after Bach has first had the works copied for his own use. Except for his ongoing use of them as teaching pieces, Bach then lays the English Suites aside, finding no good reason to rework or revise them further.

Each of the English Suites, like the suites for violoncello *senza basso* (BWV 1007-12) contains essentially the same sequence of movements: Prelude - Allemande - Courante(s) - Sarabande/Double - Galanterien [Gavotte/Bourrée/Passepied 1 and 2 alternativement] - Gigue. This structural similarity has led some scholars, such as Hans Eppstein, to assign both sets of works to the same period of Bach's creative career. However, the cello suites, as might be expected in works for a solo string instrument, are generally more unequivocally Italian in style than the *English Suites*, which, except for the *préludes* are largely French-derived, albeit exhibiting distinctly Italian, as well as indigenous, elements throughout.

Suite no 1 in A, BWV 806

The first English Suite, almost exclusively French in style, clearly pre-dates Bach's music written after his discovery of Italian concertos, including the five remaining English Suites. The *prélude*, a tautly written piece of thoroughly Germanic four-part counterpoint, pays homage to Dieupart's gigue by directly quoting the first binary section of the work. In its finished form, Bach's *prélude* closely resembles his other keyboard music in the same key, notably the two A major preludes of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. The stately, and, in contrast to later examples of the same dance, non-imitative

allemande in common time is followed by no fewer than four French-style courantes (courante 1 and courante 2 with two *doubles*, or ornamented versions). These *doubles* comprise two stylistically contrasting variants: the first a brilliant and distinctly Italian-flavoured version of the preceding French-style courante, the latter (virtually identical with the original courante 2 of BWV 806a contained in Walther's manuscript) presents the courante with a slower "walking" bass - an idea which recurs among the courantes and other dance movements of the *English Suites*. It is above all the sarabandes which constitute the emotional centres of each work. The example found in BWV 806 is among Bach's most beautiful. Comparing it with its earlier version (BWV 806a/iv) clearly shows Bach's increasingly sophisticated application of Italianate ornamentation to the sparse outlines of the original dance. The pair of bourrées provides contrast by setting the second dance in the tonic minor, restricting the right hand to a lower tessitura than that of bourrée I. The two-voice gigue in 6/8 time contains the only dynamic markings in the entire set of six suites, indicating the mandatory use of a two-manual harpsichord.

Suite no 2 in a, BWV 807

The second suite is one of Bach's most immediately appealing keyboard works, and throughout the earlier part of the twentieth century it was performed and recorded more frequently than any of the remaining five suites on both the piano and harpsichord. Its relative popularity is due to its magnificent and fiery *prélude*, emotionally charged sarabande (with a particularly affecting set

of *agréments*, in the most reliable sources, notated only in the soprano line), charming bourrées (performed *alternativement*) and tarantella-like gigue which, as Bach clearly indicates, is to be performed three times rather than the customary twice.

Suite no 3 in g, BWV 808

The third suite, like the second, is one of the more familiar to modern listeners. It opens with the set's most obviously Vivaldian prélude, whose bold thematic statement incorporates built-in crescendos by increasing the number of parts in each of the tutti sections. After the allemande and French-style courante - the latter distinguished by the usual cadential hemiolas in each section - the sarabande, like that of BWV 807 includes a fully written-out set of *agréments*. The work features an unusual enharmonic notation, changing d-flat at m.17 to c-sharp in the following bar. The two Galanterien - this time gavottes, perhaps the most overtly French dances of the entire set - form another imposing ABA structure. The second is composed over a typical French *musette* or drone bass. The imitative gigue, each section of which begins with a three-voice fugal exposition, settles quickly into two-voice texture. The second half begins with an inversion of the main subject, and brings BWV 808 to a serious, though thoroughly Italianate close.

Suite no 4 in F, BWV 809

After BWV 808, the F major suite, originally the mid-point of the sequence which made up a tonally ordered set of five works, creates an atmosphere

of sunny and less profound repose. The prélude (marked *vivement* in several early sources - rather more an indication of mood than tempo) employs in its "solo" episodes similar figuration to that found in the fifth Brandenburg Concerto, BWV 1050, suggesting that the two works were composed at about the same time. The allemande displays its common-time running semiquavers against a triplet-based melodic figure - a fashionable device later used again in the allemande from the fourth Partita of the *Clavierübung* (BWV 829/ii). After a French-style courante (the norm for the English Suites), the sarabande appears, in the most reliable manuscripts plain and unadorned. The paired minuets *alternativement* (the second in the relative minor) are followed by a brilliant *giga da caccia* - F major, naturally, being the key of the hunting horn. As is the case with all of the giges found in the *English Suites* (excepting BWV 807) the B section presents an inversion of the opening subject. The octave leaps in both treble and bass recall the *Aria di postiglione* from the *Capriccio sopra la lontananza del suo fratello dilettissimo* (BWV 992).

Suite no 5 in e, BWV 810

Bach's biographer, J. N. Forkel, singled out the final two English Suites as representing pinnacles of Bach's keyboard music. The fifth suite commences with a fugal prélude, which, like that of BWV 807, introduces a contrasting solo episode after the initial exposition. The allemande, with its rather angular melodic contours, and right and left-hand parts which cross over each other at one point, is succeeded by a dramatic and intense courante

with heavily accented downbeats. The sarabande – its galant style distinct from the classic examples of this dance found elsewhere among the *English Suites* – presents an introspective, seemingly private meditation. It is the sparest, simplest and yet one of the most profound movements to be found in the entire collection. No ornaments are included in the manuscript sources, and perhaps Bach intended none to be performed. Then follows a pair of passepieds (fast dances in simple triple time), the second in the tonic major key. The final gigue - one of the two movements selected by Forkel for specific praise as “perfect examples of melody and harmony,” introduces a theme notable for its chromatic “sighing” motives. After a fugal exposition, the subject appears inverted in the B section. Then the piece vanishes on a single low E.

Suite no 6 in d, BWV 811

The vast and complex prélude, with its mesmerizing figuration and strict counterpoint is really a combined prelude and fugue. After the slow, sustained introduction over tonic and dominant pedals, Bach develops the possibilities inherent in invertible counterpoint - an important device explored throughout the *English Suites*. After the prélude comes a sophisticated allemande, whose basic semiquaver movement is enhanced by the use of ornamental figuration also found in WTC I/16a. This is followed by a French courante superimposed over an Italian “walking bass” (as in the second double of BWV 806). The impressive and tersely composed sarabande is enlarged upon and illuminated by the addition of a fully written-out

double, in the French *style brisé*, clearly intended to be performed as a separate piece. There follows a pair of gavottes, the first, like the courante continuing the “walking bass” patterns (or running in this case), while the second (like BWV 808/vi) is a gavotte *ou la musette*, with hypnotic drone effects. After this whimsical pair of dances, the suite concludes the entire collection with what is perhaps Bach’s most extraordinary gigue. In the second section of this demonic and difficult piece Bach foreshadows his own much later use of “mirror writing”, so exhaustively explored in *The Art of Fugue* (BWV 1080). With its striking harmonies and long chromatic trills on extended pedal-points, the movement presents (as does the b minor fugue of *The Well-Tempered Clavier I*) a sort of compositional “crown of thorns” - a bizarre yet compelling conclusion for a collection which is, in all likelihood, one of Bach’s earliest masterpieces.

Comments on the Double Manual Harpsichord in German Style

by Martin Skowronek, Bremen, 1985 - opus 59

The harpsichord used on this recording is based on an unsigned instrument in the Charlottenberg Castle, Berlin.

The Christian Zell instrument in Hamburg (1723) served as a comparative model in the design, since it is similarly constructed.

The unsigned instrument – presumably built by Mietcke – is no longer in its original state. The compass has been altered from *GG* (without *GG#*) - *c'''* to *FF* (without *FF#*) - *e'''*, thereby disturbing the layout of the keyboard and the tuning pins. It is therefore very difficult – and probably impossible – to ascertain the original scaling (string length). It is not known when the alterations were undertaken. The extra keys and jacks are so similar to the original ones that it is possible that the instrument was already rebuilt in its original workshop. In fact, the instrument may even have been altered before it left the workshop in the first place.

In light of these considerations it seems imprudent to reduce the scaling by a whole tone as a result of

the layout of the tuning pins. The present scaling is very similar to the Zell harpsichord – although the Mietcke scaling is somewhat more irregular and imprecise than the other instrument. This might be easily explained as a result of the later alterations. In addition, documentary evidence confirms that the two harpsichords in the Charlottenburg Castle – there is also a single manual instrument at hand – were «destroyed» by the Russian soldiers during the Seven Years' War, so that errors could have crept in during the subsequent repairs.

For this new instrument, therefore, a scaling has been chosen which corresponds either to the present scaling – without, however, its erroneous features – or to that of Christian Zell. The range of *GG* - *e'''* has been selected; the low *FF* on the original has been used so that the keyboard can be transposed a half step.

Tuning pitch is $a' = 397$ Hz and temperament, the Haugsand V3.5.2....

- And yet - all of a sudden, things clicked and ideas gelled. Perhaps, getting older was part of it.



Admittedly, it took a while to build up the courage of taking on the English Suites. The Partitas were already such a challenge - the French Suites have their quirks, as well - but the 'English'..! Even if they are earlier than the

two other groups, they generate a perception of something really much more, truly mature!

Their majestic Préludes are awesome and challenging - music for professionals and not merely aimed at 'those, desirous to learn' - the strict layout and build-up of the dance movements, are clear-cut musical messages to someone in the know.

Allemandes: Stoic and never hurried in their serene and profound contrapuntal poetry, setting the *suite propre* off into realms of beauty no one had entered before - and only Bach himself, afterwards. Recognizing their hue as all the more 'French' than most other gallantries in the hands of the author - the dazzling Courantes lead to very subtle renderings, including the typical phrase-dependent *inégale* - as if they had been 'made in France', but here, only better - the A major set is in itself, a school of the genre - unsurpassed, in its way, ever after!

Sarabandes, so profound, they make you weep vehemently as a consequence of their emotional impact - with *agreements* that seem to want eagerly work out of left-hand parts to cope with the right, as if the simple printed alternative couldn't have been his last word on the subject - and Bach's never-repeating himself in unrelenting quest for utter *exqu Coast* - be it, in bourrées, gavottes, minuets or a *passepied-en-rondeau* - leave you in audible jaw-dropping or broad smiles over never-ending, 'intelligent' wit!

Gigues, as strict fugal counterpoint - second-halves, mostly inverted, thematically - with a verve and a

nerve like nothing else comparable - conclude these masterworks in such wondrous ways; one craves for more and never stops admiring the marvels of it all!

Coming of age has taken away a lot of prejudice and a tedious need for pre-fabricated 'assumed correctness' - resulting in a freer musical treatment of the above mentioned:

If a courante really is 'French' - why deny it of its typical features and inherent qualities?

And, if the composer has composed them that well and knowingly, one can assume that he knew the genre fully and how it was to be played, right?

There were French musicians 'all over the place' - Bach must have heard them play - and would instantly sense how they played - or he would not have written their music as well as he did, for, it is indeed written with the deepest understanding of it - to the core.

Having copied the Dieupart suites set the modeling layout and an *Exemplar* of the Couperin pieces contributed inspiration for the reminder.

Clearer consequences for inspired interpretation are made easier that way - and have less to do with 'interpretation' than one would think.

The *Gemüths Ergoetzung* radiating from their inner glow is unending and generate artistic gratitude far more profound than most other music of this genre - I feel utterly humble to have been given the great opportunity to share these magnificent and immortal suites with all of you!

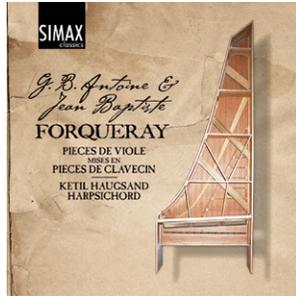
In deep gratitude, I also want to thank the Deutschlandradio in Cologne for generous disposal of their

excellent Kammermusiksaal - but above all, to dear friend and producer-genius François Eckert for his fantastic and confidence-building hand-in-hand work, for, without his relentless and positive, always tastefully focused, on top of the recording overview, this recording would not have come out like it has!

Ketil Haugsand

Ketil Haugsand, professor of harpsichord at the Hochschule für Musik in Cologne, counts as one of the great harpsichordists and Early Music personalities of today. The Norwegian born musician studied with Gustav Leonhardt at the Amsterdam Conservatory, where he was awarded the coveted 'Prix d'Excellence' in 1975. Later he was laureate at international harpsichord competitions in Paris and Bruges. He has appeared in many prestigious festivals in Europe, the U.S.A. and Israel, both as recitalist, in chamber music and as conductor of the Norwegian Baroque Orchestra and the Arte Real Ensemble. His recordings on CD with works by Bach, Rameau, Marchand, Forqueray, Seixas, Sousa Carvalho a/o for Simax Classics, Virgin and Linn have won significant international acclaim.

Haugsand is a jury member at international harpsichord competitions in Warsaw, Leipzig, Hamburg and Prague, and gives summer courses regularly in Norway and Portugal.



Forqueray: “Pieces de Viole mises en Pieces de Clavecin” – Complete Works for Harpsichord

PSC1317 (2CD)



J.S. Bach: Goldberg Variations

PSC1192

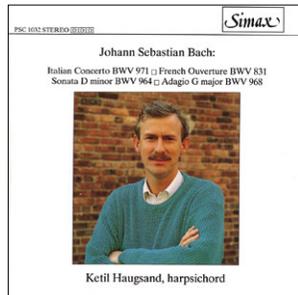
Haugsand is a player whose rhetorical capabilities and stubbornly musical instincts have found a rightful home in this masterpiece. This is as genial, engaging and mature a musical imagination as I have heard in the Goldbergs. A truly exceptional achievement. [Gramophone]



J.S. Bach: The Six Partitas, BWV 825-30

PSC1086 (2CD)

There is so much to praise in these performances: the solid technique, the immense variety on articulation, the plasticity of rhythm, and the range of tone colors [...] the high quality of the recording, and the tonal beauty of Haugsand's harpsichord [...] are only icing on the cake. This is an outstanding recording. [Fanfare]

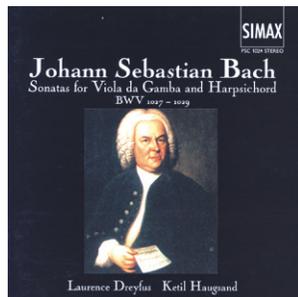


J.S. Bach: Harpsichord Works

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