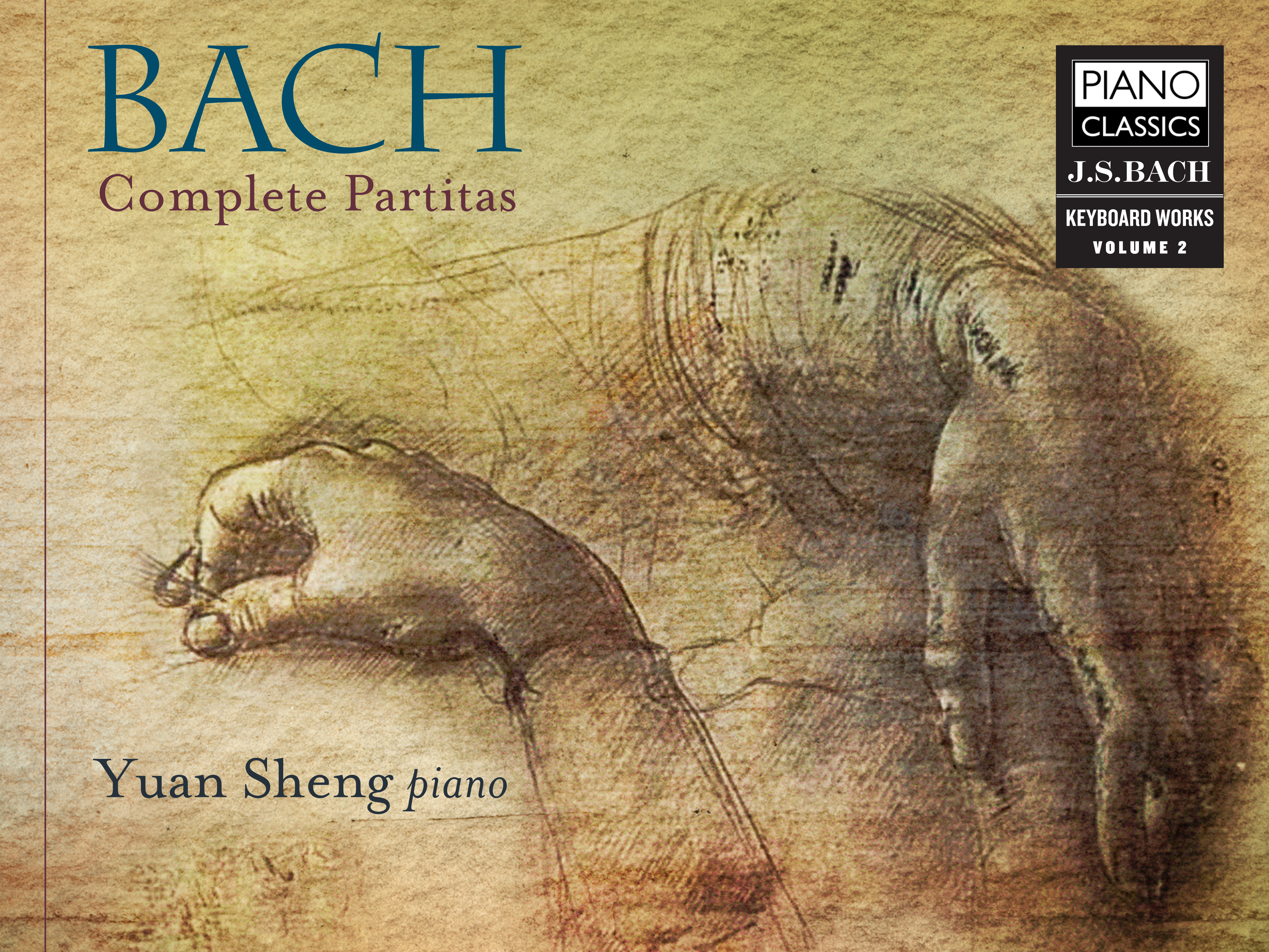

BACH
Complete Partitas
PIANO CLASSICS
J.S.BACH
KEYBOARD WORKS
VOLUME 2
Yuan Sheng piano

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)

Partita No. 1 in B-Flat Major, BWV 825

1.	Praeludium	1'46
2.	Allemande	3'51
3.	Corrente	2'57
4.	Sarabande	5'35
5.	Menuet I&II	3'09
6.	Giga	2'02

Partita No.2 in C Minor, BWV 826

7.	Sinfonia	4'16
8.	Allemande	4'37
9.	Courante	2'21
10.	Sarabande	3'59
11.	Rondeaux	1'25
12.	Capriccio	3'34

Partita No.4 in D Major, BWV 828

13.	Ouverture	6'17
14.	Allemande	9'06
15.	Courante	3'40
16.	Sarabande	6'08
17.	Aria	2'13
18.	Menuet	1'26
19.	Gigue	3'35

Partita No.3 in A Minor, BWV 827

20.	Fantasia	2'08
21.	Allemande	2'46
22.	Corrente	3'25
23.	Sarabande	4'38
24.	Burlesca	2'17
25.	Scherzo	1'10
26.	Gigue	3'15

Partita No.5 in G Major, BWV 829

27.	Praeambulum	2'38
28.	Allemande	4'20
29.	Corrente	1'50
30.	Sarabande	5'08
31.	Tempo di Menuetta	1'55
32.	Passepied	1'44
33.	Gigue	3'48

Partita No.6 in E Minor, BWV 830

34.	Toccata	6'56
35.	Allemanda	3'06
36.	Corrente	4'49
37.	Sarabande	6'54
38.	Air	1'29
39.	Tempo di Gavotta	2'11
40.	Gigue	6'06

Bach at 40

In 1725 Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) was a middle-aged man with an important position since 1723 as Cantor of the legendary choir school of St. Thomas Church in Leipzig. He had a formidable reputation as a brilliant keyboardist and an impressive body of compositions, sacred and secular, for keyboard, chamber ensembles, and orchestra as well as voices. Yet, unlike his most eminent contemporaries with international reputations (such Handel and Telemann, François Couperin and Rameau, and Corelli, Torelli, and Vivaldi, to name some whose work was known to Bach), Bach's music—because it was not published--was essentially unknown beyond the immediate circle of his family, students, and colleagues, or the congregations who heard his church music. By 1725, this included not only most of the keyboard music familiar today—the English and French Suites, the 2 and 3-part Inventions, Book I of The Well-Tempered Clavier—but also the unaccompanied music for violin and cello, the Brandenburg Concertos, as well as a good portion of the cantatas. (In fact, none of this music, save one early cantata, would appear in print until the 19th century.)

But around 1725 something caused Bach to reevaluate his professional status and *modus operandi*. Virtually all of the keyboard music had been written in connection with his teaching. Perhaps Bach imagined that he could leverage his not inconsiderable local eminence by offering to the *public* compositions that would further cement his stature. That might lead, in turn, to other professional opportunities; Bach was always interested in increasing his income and reputation—not least was the fact that he had a household full of children to feed.

Moreover, Bach was becoming disillusioned with the cantorship because, as has been recently documented by Michael Maul, his position and authority were increasingly weakened by the Leipzig City Council. In fact,

Bach had been misled about the conditions under which he was to work. Up to 1723 admission to St. Thomas's school had been based on musical talent, making the choir the most excellent in Protestant Germany. However, this resulted in a student body that was largely from outside Leipzig. Additionally, interest in the humanistic educational ideals of the budding Enlightenment led the city fathers to a downgrade musical talent as an admissions criterion in the revised rules of St. Thomas's School; these had been finalized before Bach's arrival, but were not announced until he had already signed his contract. The rule changes undermined Bach's goal of "a well-regulated church music."

Moreover, at forty, Bach must have been increasingly aware of both his mortality and his artistic worth. Therefore, if he were to make his mark on history, this would be best accomplished by publication, since performances were totally ephemeral.

Whatever the motivations, Bach began a systematic project of keyboard music that found published form between the years 1726 and 1741, all subsumed under the unpretentious title *Clavierübung* (literally, keyboard practice). The project began with a single work (the Partita in B-flat, BWV 825), but over time expanded into a cycle of six separately published Partitas that were then assembled into a single collection, *Clavier-Übung,* Part I as Bach's Opus 1 in 1731. Then followed in 1735 Part II, containing the Italian Concerto, BWV 971 and the French Ouverture, BWV 831. In 1739 Part III appeared, including music for organ and likely domestic keyboard instruments, and the grand endeavor was finally concluded in 1741 with the Goldberg Variations, BWV 988. All in all, the *Clavierübung* offers a breathtaking view of the world of keyboard music of the time as seen by the greatest musician of the era, a veritable encyclopedia of forms, styles, techniques. That Bach was making a statement for history seems clear, giving the sophistication and scope of the project.

"Suite" and "Partita"

The baroque suite is a composite instrumental work of several movements, mostly dances, usually unified by a common tonality. Its history is complicated, not least because lute, keyboard, ensemble, and orchestral suites developed to some extent independently of one another and even acquired distinct names. (This will be addressed more completely in the notes to subsequent recordings by Yuan Sheng of Bach's English Suites and French Suites.)

Bach used the title "Suite" for multi-movement works structured as follows:

Prelude (optional)
Allemande
Courante (or Corrente)
Sarabande
Optional dance movements (usually two): bourrée, gavotte, menuet, etc.
Gigue (or Giga).

Sometimes a dance was immediately followed by a variation of it, or *double*, or there might be more than one example of a given dance-type, e.g., two Menuets.

In Germany a different name was usually used for suite-like works for keyboard: "Partie" or "Partita," a term of Italian derivation also used in connection with variation sets, e.g., Bach's organ variations on chorale tunes. Early use of *Partie* for suite is found in the *Neues Clavier Ubung* [sic] by Johann Kuhnau, whom Bach succeeded as Cantor of St. Thomas's in Leipzig. Published in two sets of seven *Partien*, this work was extremely popular and certainly was known to Bach. Four of the *Partien* of Part I (1689) follow the "classic" structure of prelude-allemande-courante-sarabande-gigue (in one case, the gigue is replaced by a Menuet—a common choice for a closing

movement in French and German suites; in the other, an Aria replaces the sarabande.) In Part II (1692), however, Kuhnau's *Partien* diverge more from the classical model, with only three adhering to it. The gigue is replaced variously by a bourrée, aria, and menuet, and one of the introductory movements is, perhaps uniquely in the suite repertory, a ciacona.

Similar freedom is found in Johann Krieger's *Sechs Musicalische Partien* (1697). Here only two of the Partitas end with a gigue, since non-core dances follow, rather than precede, the gigue. The eight *Partien auf das* Clavier (Darmstadt, 1718) by Christoph Graupner, who had turned down the position of Cantor in Leipzig before it was offered to Bach, exhibit even greater looseness of structure, the number of movements ranging from five to twelve; moreover, three of eight lack one of the core dances and non-core dances appear in other than their accustomed place.

Bach seems to have distinguished terminologically between the more traditional "Suite" and the freer "Partita." Thus, he used the title "Partita" or "Partie" not only for the works in *Clavierübung* Part I, but also those for unaccompanied violin, BWV 1002, 1004, and 1006, and for unaccompanied flute, BWV 1013. Here one finds divergence from the "classical" tradition of core dances adhered to rigorously in the English Suites, the French Suites, and the Cello Suites. Thus, not every Partita of Bach's Opus I contains all of the core movement-types, although both non-standard dances (e.g., bourrée, gavotte) and even non-dance character pieces (e.g., burlesque, scherzo) are introduced. Moreover, following earlier composers but uniquely in his own keyboard suites, Bach's closes Partita II with something other than a gigue, here a Capriccio.

The Title *Clavierübung*

In using the title *Clavierübung* Bach probably consciously adopted the overall title of Kuhnau's collections, *Clavier-Ubung*, in what might represent both a tip of the hat in homage but also a throwing down of the gauntlet in a spirit of competition. However, the literal translation "keyboard practice" does suggest that both collections had a pedagogical purpose and that they were intended more for domestic use than public performance. The legacy of the classical suite is clear in both, since neither composer wanders too far from it. Kuhnau's introductory movements are usually titled "Praeludium," the same term used by Bach for the opening of his Partita I. But Kuhnau's pieces are much shorter and technically less challenging than Bach's, and thus appealed to a broader and less sophisticated audience than Bach's. Moreover, Kuhnau's sets lack the systematic sense of overall design that is fundamental to Bach's Opus I (see below).

Kuhnau's title was subsequently used by Johann Krieger in his *Anmuthige Clavier-Ubung* (published 1698 but containing music written earlier); this was a collection of various types of organ music (as was Bach's *Clavierübung* III of 1739) that was much praised by Handel. Moreover, once Bach's series began, other composers brought out eponymous publications for harpsichord or organ: Vincent Lübeck (Hamburg, 1728), Christoph Graupner (3 vols. in manuscript, Darmstadt, c. 1730), Georg Andreas Sorge (Nuremberg, 1739-42), Johann Sigismund Scholze (Leipzig, 1736-46), and Bach's brilliant organ student (from 1726 to 1734) Johann Ludwig Krebs (Nuremberg, c.1744).

National Styles and the Partitas

For European musicians of the baroque, there was a recognized antithesis between Italian and French music, and debating the relative merits of each was a recurring activity. The Italians created the baroque style in music, with new genres such as the sonata, cantata, oratorio, concerto and, most important, opera. Italian music was known for its extravagant expression and Italian musicians for their stupendous virtuosity; thus, Italian opera, once it became commercial in 1637, put the greatest focus on vocal virtuosity and little on dramatic integrity. The Italians also put great stress on melody and a free, improvised kind of melodic ornamentation that essentially continued the Renaissance tradition of dividing longer notes into many shorter notes. Moreover, in Italian music not only the voice, but its instrumental counterpart, the violin, predominates.

France, on the other hand, especially during the reign of Louis XIV (1661-1715) eschewed Italian values. Italian opera, after it was introduced, was essentially hounded out of France, replaced by a fundamentally different approach to musical theater that put greatest stress on the poetry, dramatic structure, and clarity of diction inspired by France's great moment of theater: this was, after all, the age of Corneille, Racine, and Molière. The subtle and refined approach to diction in the theater was reflected in music, especially in ornamentation, with publications of music often providing precise explanations of individual French ornaments. (Bach knew several published French ornament tables.) But most important for European culture as a whole was the special French focus on dance, for it was the "noble style" of French court dance that triumphed all over Europe. For this reason, France played an especially important role in the development of the suite. This is reflected in the important repertory produced by French harpsichord composers beginning around 1650 and continuing for a century; following the example of lute music, they developed a keyboard texture of free polyphony in which voices dropped in and out, known as the *stile brisé* (broken style). Bach incorporated the French *stile brisé* in many of his French-style dance movements

Germany, a culturally backward nation that looked to Italy and France for models, found its own footing in taking something from both and combining that with its own genius for harmonic richness and counterpoint. Germans therefore spoke of their "mixed style," which in Bach's Partitas reaches an extraordinary degree of synthesis and perfection. Thus, a French sarabande may have melody suggestive of Corellian ornamentation along with specifically French ornamental symbols on individual notes (Partita I). Moreover, the prefatory movements of the Partitas may be French (Partita IV), Italianate (Partita VI), or both (Partita II).

The variety within the courante-types presents a special case. Two types of courante, the dignified French Courante proper (in $\frac{3}{2}$ meter but with some measures in $\frac{6}{4}$ feeling) and the fast Italian Corrente (usually in $\frac{3}{4}$) are represented in Bach's Partitas; they occur in the same position, i.e., after the Allemande and before the Sarabande, but they are so different in style that one wonders why composers functionally equated them. The probable reason is that both genres ultimately go back to the late-Renaissance *coronto/courante/corrente*, popular all over Europe as a fast, leaping dance. In the course of the 17th century, however, the French tamed the courante, turning it into the slowest, most dignified dance, one particularly favored by the young Louis XIV. When Bach wrote the Partitas, however, the courante was going out of fashion in the ballroom, although still essential to dance instruction, as evidenced by Gottfried Taubert's important manual on French dance (Leipzig, 1717; Eng. trans. by T. Russell, 2012), which touts the courante as "the crowning glory of a *galant* dancer." There was some

difference of opinion regarding the tempo and character of the courante in Bach's Germany: Johann Mattheson basically equates courante and corrente as fast pieces, but his contemporary and Bach's relation J. G. Walther describes the rhythm of the danced courante as "the most serious of all" (*allerernsthaffteste*). The resolution to this seeming contradition may lie in the fact that the musical essence of the dance is in the harmonic rhythm, which moves generally in stately half- and dotted half notes, whereas it is the decorative upper voice that moves in much smaller, hence fast, note-values.

Descriptions of the corrente as a dance after the early 17th century do not exist, so it apparently developed in 17th-century Italy as a genre of harpsichord and violin music that maintained the lively character of its Renaissance precedessor, rather than being totally transformed like the courante.

As regards gigue and giga, Bach syntheses elements of both rather than keeping them distinct, as in the courante and corrente. Thus, like other German composers, he generally continues the French tradition of imitative gigues but develops each section of the binary form as a full-fledged fugue (Partitas III-IV) or even double fugue (Partitas V and VI). Walther referred to such pieces as a "fugues in the style of a gigue," implying precedence of compositional approach over dance-form. On the other hand, there is absent from the Partitas the *sautillant* rhythm (♩. ♪ ♩ or ♩. ♫) common in French gigues. From the Italian giga, Bach frequently takes the swinging triplet feeling naturally generated by typical giga meters such as $\frac{12}{8}$ (Partita III), $\frac{6}{8}$ (Partita V), and even $\frac{9}{16}$ (Partita IV); but despite the Italianate flow of these pieces, he titles them "Gigue." The special cases of Partitas I and VI are treated below.

The Reception of the Partitas in a Galant Society

On the title page of every Partita publication, Bach declares that the music offered is intended to give pleasure to music lovers (*Liebhabern*, a term also repeatedly used by Kuhnau). In short, his intended audience is principally the large number of serious amateur musicians who would play the music in their homes, for their own pleasure and the pleasure of others.

This meant that Bach, a man of conservative tastes and inclinations, had to bear in mind the tastes of the moment and show that he was *au courant* with the fashions of the time. Thus, the Partitas incorporate features reflecting the transformation of musical style away from the baroque to the lighter, more transparent *galant* style.

The term *galant* is difficult to define because it refers to so many different things. It implies taste, elegance, and wit. The French term, used ubiquitously in Germany at this time, reflects the powerful influence of French culture, especially of middle-class salons involving shrewd and savvy hostesses (*salonnières*), intellectuals, visiting notables, and artists of all kinds. Moreover, as Andrew Talle has perceptibly argued, the *galant* is associated with what is non-obligatory and ornamental to life. Music played such a role in polite society, including the largely bourgeoise culture of Leipzig, a city without a resident ruler (the Elector of Saxony's court was in Dresden) and one run largely by the middle-class merchants. Moreover, the French language was considered—as it would be for generations to come internationally—the language of culture and diplomacy. French landscape architects had designed gardens outside the city walls, French fashion set the tone for dress, and there were a dozen French dancing masters active in Leipzig to help its upwardly-mobile citizens keep up with the latest ballroom craze.

In music, the *galant* implied clarity, tunefulness, regularity of phrasing and an absence of the complexities of which Bach was the acknowledged

master. In 1737 he would be criticized in print for his "turgid" style of complex polyphony, yet later the same critic (his one-time student Johann Adolf Scheibe) would cite the Italian Concerto—one of Bach's most *galant* pieces—as an ideal model of its kind. So we know that, if he tried, Bach could satisfy popular taste.

The Partitas also show Bach taking steps in the direction of the *galant* style of music. We see it in the use of 2- and 4-bar phrasing in pieces like allemandes (normally characterized by irregular phrase lengths) and even in some of the free opening movements; such bite-sized musical units are easily comprehended and digested. There is also wit of a kind not typically associated with him: for example, the Burlesca (which Andreas Jacob calls a "menuet in wooden shoes" because of it clunky quality) and Scherzo of Partita III. And even though Bach could not make himself renounce counterpoint and rich textures completely, his use of 2-part counterpoint when he might have otherwise employed three or even four voices (e.g., the fugue of the Sinfonia of Partita II) indicates a desire for transparency of texture. Finally, there is an element of pure entertainment in the employment of hand-crossings in the Giga of Partita I that would surely delight any watching listener.

The Publication History of the Partitas

When Bach published Partita I as the first part of his *Clavierübung*, he may not yet have had a sense of the whole project worked out in his mind, a project that would not be completed until 1741. Telling is the newspaper notice of November 1, 1726 announcing the availability of Partita I, but not indicating how many more were planned:

> *"Mr. Johann Sebastian Bach wants to publish an opus of keyboard suites, and is already ready with the first Partita, and wishes to continue the series now and again until the opus is finished."*

However, by 1730, Bach had apparently decided that there would be *seven* Partitas (as in Kuhnau's two collections): a newspaper announcement of May 1 reports not only that Partita V is available but that the "last two" works in the series would be ready for the autumn Fair in October, one of three annual international trade fairs Leipzig had hosted for centuries. But only Partita VI was released (as inferred from circumstantial evidence, since no copies survive), and that without a separate public announcement, as Bach was by now planning for the publication of all six Partitas as his Opus I in 1731 and probably did not want to undercut sales of the collection in favor of a single work.

Perhaps for reasons of cost or control over the process Bach chose to self-publish the Partitas. Therefore, he took all the financial risks involved, but stood to make a greater profit. He lined up two of his students to do the music engraving: Balthasar Schmid (Partitas I and II) and the Halle organist Johann Gotthilf Ziegler (Partitas III-VI). Although Bach sold Partita I and presumably also Partitas IV-VI out of his own home, he appointed six friends (located in Dresden, Halle, Lüneburg, Wolfenbüttel, and two south German cities, Nuremberg and Augsburg) as agents to sell Partita II. When the collected edition, Opus I, came out in 1731, Bach arranged with a bookseller located right in Leipzig's landmark Town Hall to sell the work (a fact noted on the title page of the first, 1731 printing, but not the second and third, suggesting that Bach again sold the music from his home). It is not clear when the second and third printings (each incorporating minor changes) were issued, but the third must have been before November 1736, when Bach was appointed Royal Court Composer in Dresden; had that occurred already, it surely would have been proclaimed on the title page.

Although Bach publicly announced on September 1, 1727 his intention to produce a new Partita for each succeeding fair, he was unable to meet this schedule. In fact, the years the six Partitas appeared were 1726, 1727, 1727,

1728, 1730, and 1730. The failure to produce a Partita in 1729 may be due to the fact that that year Bach got involved with the Collegium musicum, with the need to produce numerous concerts in Zimmermann's Coffee House (and in Zimmermann's Coffee Garden outside the city walls in the summer), not only during the three annual fairs, but also throughout the year.

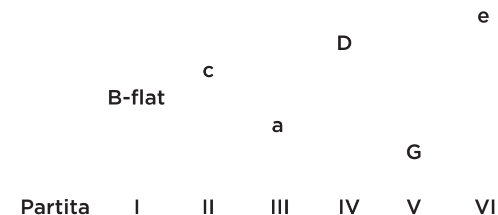
Despite the delays in producing the Partitas, Bach's commercial hopes were apparently fulfilled, judging from the unusually large number of surviving copies of *Clavierübung* that survive (and the high prices Bach charged for them). The overall success of the Partitas surely encouraged Bach to continue his *Clavierübung* series.

The Partitas as a Set

The Partitas provide a good example of how Bach thinks about large scale organization and how he explores a particular idea exhaustively. For example, every introductory movement preceding the Allemande has a different title and form: Praeludium, Sinfonia, Fantasia, Ouverture, Praeambulum, Toccata. Clearly there is an intent to avoid repetition and achieve encyclopedic variety. Likewise, no two Partitas have exactly the same sequence of movements, even though Bach maintains the traditional ordering of allemande-courante-sarabande-gigue (save in Partita II) and, as was also common since the late 17th century, incorporates other optional movements (*Galanterien*) between the Sarabande and Gigue: Menuet I and II (Partita 1), Rondeaux and Capriccio (Partita 2), Burlesca and Scherzo (Partita 3), Aria and Menuet (Partita 4), Tempo di Minuetta and Passepied (Partita 5), and Air and Tempo di Gavotta (Partita 6). In fact, fewer than half of these twelve movements are dances; the others are better characterized as character pieces. This freedom near the close of each Partita undoubtedly was inspired by late-17th-century and early 18th-century French harpsichord composers, who began to give programmatic titles to some movements, including the core dances; this would be the hallmark of the suites (*ordres*) of François Couperin, which began to appear in 1713. It is known that Bach highly respected Couperin, with whom he reputedly corresponded.

Of particular interest is that the Aria (Partita IV) and Air (Partita VI) are placed in the original publications and in modern editions in front of the Sarabande; however, Kenneth Gilbert, citing Rameau (c. 1728), asserts that the ordering of pieces in prints was designed for convenience of page-turning, which could conflict with performance order; therefore, assuming that Bach was following the model of many French publications of keyboard music, the Aria and Air should be played *after* the Sarabande, as is the case in the present recording.

Another large-scale organizing principle is tonality: no two Partitas are in the same key and, more importantly, there is a logical ordering of keys, such that the tonic notes are arranged in a wedge-like arrangement of increasing distance (note also the alternation of major and minor in each series):



The emphasis on variety and non-repetition is continued on the level of individual movements of the same type. The Allemandes, although all in a duple meter (normally 𝄴, but Partita 2 has, uniquely, a cut-time meter signature), admit of many different styles, and seem to become ever more

rhythmically complicated and denser as one proceeds through the series. The Gigues are notable for each having a different meter signature, Partita 6 even bearing a *recherché*, archaic one that seems to be Bach's final challenge to the performer of Clavierübung I.

The Individual Partitas

Partita I, BWV 825

Partita I in B-flat major is the one that comes closest to the traditional keyboard suite in terms of content, consisting, as it does, of Allemande, Corrente, Sarabande and Gigue with a preceding Praeludium and two Menuets interpolated between Sarabande and Gigue. Andreas Jacob has suggested that the work is very Italianate in its figurations, notably in the Allemande, the melody of which one can easily imagine as being conceived for violin, with the natural undulation between odd- and even-numbered 16th notes ("good" and "bad" notes in the technical parlance of the period) producing a natural dynamic and subtle rhythmic unevenness natural with the baroque bow—something that can be imitated on the keyboard. Similarly the Corrente is easily imagined as imitating an equal-voiced duet between violin and cello, whereas the Sarabande employs largely Italianate ornamentation in its melody, accompanied by the keyboardist's left hand in the style of a continuo part.

The two Menuets are straightforward textbook examples of the genre, built with 2-bar phrase units (the menuet—the most popular of dances—has a basic step-unit requiring 6 beats); hence, the metrical feeling is not three beats to a measure but two big beats over 2 measures, to be interpreted respectively as "good" and "bad" in terms of stress. The texture of Menuet I is that of an implicitly two-voice melody over an accompanying bass of largely arpeggiated chords to provide harmony as well as a bass melody supporting the top line. Menuet II, on the other hand, is written in strict 4-part harmony, with several short instances of a bagpipe-like drone to suggest a rustic character. It is of interest that there exists a manuscript (H 17[1]) that preserves presumably early versions of the minuets. This source indicates, for example, that Menuet II was originally conceived in three, not four voices. There is another source (G 26), an exemplar of the Opus I print, where Menuet II is embellished with ornaments and staccatos that may go back to Bach.[2]

The Giga is the most puzzling movement of the Partita, not least because of its fairly unusual meter signature of C, despite there being 12 eighth-notes in a measure without triplet brackets. Textually, the movement is written in two layers of movement, each in its own meter: that in C, notated in quarter-notes is itself in two strata, treble melody and accompanying bass, and that in an *unwritten* $\frac{12}{8}$ for the triplet-sounding accompanying voice providing harmonic filler (eighth-note-rest eighth-note eighth-note throughout). This is the only non-fugal "gigue" among the Partitas, and its $\frac{12}{8}$ meter and essentially homophonic character also justify the Italian title "Giga," the only piece so titled among the Partitas.

It was common for suite movements to be linked melodically or harmonically, and in this Partita the harmonic progression I-IV-V-I appears at the beginning of the Allemande, Corrente, and Giga. Another feature found at the beginning of several movements—Praeludium, Allemande, Sarabande, Menuet II, and Giga—is the use of an explicit or implicit pedal-point; although the Corrente lacks this, it compensates by constantly repeating the pitch B-flat in the right hand. It should be noted, however, that pedal points of a measure or more are ubiquitous in the Bach suites and hardly limited to this Partita.

Partita II, BWV 826

The C-minor Partita II opens with a "Sinfonia," its tripartite form perhaps intended to mimic the three sections of an Italian opera *Sinfonia* (= overture). Meter signatures are also of interest here, beginning with a 7-measure opening section in French Ouverture style. The section is in 𝄵 and is marked *Grave adagio*. It is therefore reasonable to infer that the beat is a slower than normal quarter-note. however, the beat is *not* the eighth-note, as so often played, thereby slowing the movement such that the really interesting and obviously intentional rhythmical distribution of left-hand chords—different in each of the first four measures—cannot be perceived:

Beat	1	2	3	4
m.1	chord	rest	chord	rest
m.2	rest	chord	chord	rest
m.3	chord	rest	rest	chord
m.4	chord	rest	anacrusis	chord

There is a manuscript of this Partita (H 20^{3}) that gives ornamented versions of the Ouverture opening and the Sarabande; these are of interest because the copyist was the Bach student J.G. Müthel, so the ornaments reflect either suggestions by Bach himself or at least examples of the sort of ornamentation characteristic of the time, hence, models useful for modern performers.

The cut-time meter implies a faster than normal tempo for this Allemande. But also unusual is the canon at the octave that opens the piece and the tight, stretto-like imitation initiating the "B" section, the predominance of 2-voice texture, and the regular 2-bar phrases in a genre normally characterized by irregular phrasing.

The Courante is clearly in the French style, although Bach here does not introduce contrast between $\frac{3}{2}$ and $\frac{6}{4}$ feeling to the degree that French composers do, reserving it to only the last measure of each section. The Sarabande, moreover, shows virtually none of the traditional sarabande earmarks (such as stress on the second beat), despite its $\frac{3}{4}$ meter, 4-bar phrases, and binary form. Of special note are the detailed slurrings in mm. 13-16, either a warning against playing the notes detached and/or an instruction to play them as groups of four. The theme of the Rondeaux is light, witty, and perhaps a bit frivolous—in short, very French! Between the recurrences of the theme occur episodes of contrasting material. But the overriding organizational device for the entire piece is the fact that each of the *rondeau* and episodal sections has a length of 16 measures divided into two phrases of 8 measures.

Finally, Partita II stands alone in the set for omitting the gigue as a final movement (a practice common in other composers). Instead, Bach allows the second *Galanterie* interpolated after the Sarabande, a Capriccio, to serve as the final movement. Stylistically and formally, a capriccio could be many things in the baroque period. Here Bach writes a fairly homophonic piece in which the opening melody recurs several times in the course of the "A" section; the "B" section, interestingly, inverts the melody much as Bach tends to invert the A subject for the B section of his Gigues. Finally, the melody returns in its original form near the end of the "B" section to round off the form nicely, as also occurs in the Gigues of Partitas III and VI.

As in Partita I, several movements of Partita II are seemingly linked by common material, in this case the rising melodic motif G-C-D-E-flat, found at the opening of the second section of the Sinfonia, m. 3 and 7 of the Allemande, and m. 1 of the Sarabande.

Partita III, BWV 827

Partita III was not newly written for Bach's *Clavierübung*: an early version of it (untitled) was copied by Bach himself into the music notebook of his second wife Anna Magdalena late in 1725. In revising the work for publication, not only did Bach change two of movement titles--the Prelude became a Fantasia and the Menuet a Burlesca—but he also inserted a new movement, "Scherzo," between Burlesca and Gigue. Fantasia, of course, was a very loose term; like Capriccio, it could mean a piece drawing from a wide range styles and textures, but here Bach limits himself to a 2-voice invention-like texture throughout that incorporates invertible counterpoint (e.g., mm. 31-4 and 40-43; more loosely, mm. 31-50 is mm. 1-20 transposed with voices exchanged).

The Allemande is unusual both for its quarter-note rather than sixteenth-note upbeat and its movement mainly in 32nd notes rather than 16ths. One sees in this (as also in the Allemandes of Partitas V and VI) an increasing departure from the standard allemande model.

Joshua Rifkin has proposed that the Scherzo owes something to Conrad Friedrich Hurlebusch's visit to Bach in Leipzig, presumably around 1726. Hurlebusch had a penchant for composing scherzos and Bach perhaps saw an opportunity to add further variety to his Partitas by incorporating one of his own. According to Peter Williams, the meter $\frac{2}{4}$ implies a tempo that is not too fast with weight on both beats of the bar. The left-hand chords on every quarter-note support this, although it should also be noted that the first eight left-hand chords are in two groups, in each of which the number of notes decreases as the lowest note of the chord gets higher. This seems to imply a decrescendo in each group following a strongly attacked first chord on the *second* beat of the bar, thereby producing a syncopated effect that could be viewed as comic. (The same occurs at the beginning of the "B" section.) A real surprise, off-beat attack is in measure 28 near the end of the "B" section when the left-hand chord has the minor second G#-A. Here Bach seems to have incorporated something of the "joke" implied by the Italian word for it, *scherzo*.

The Gigue manifests the "mixed style" in that the $\frac{12}{8}$ meter and lilting triplet feeling lend an Italianate buoyancy and brilliance, but the imitative texture is a French tradition. Beyond this, however, is another interesting question. The critical edition of the Partitas in the *Neue-Bach-Ausgabe* (Vol. V/1 [1978]) is based mainly on an exemplar (G 23) with emendations thought to be in Bach's own hand. However, there are other exemplars of Bach's Opus I (G 25, G 26, and G 28) that have (different) handwritten additions to the printed score. In 2003 Andrew Talle proposed that G 28, not G 23, was in fact Bach's personal copy of his Opus I. If true, this copy's annotations may better reflect Bach's post-publication thoughts about the B section of the Gigue of Partita III: here the revisions treat the B subject as a more exact inversion of the A subject than found in the *NBA* and other modern editions. The musical text of the B section in G 25, along with the few differences between it and G 26 and G 28, is published in the *Critical Report* to NBA V/1, pp. 17f.; this enables one to reconstruct the version in G 28, which conceivably represents Bach's final "improvement" of the piece. (This recording uses the version in G 25, printed in the Wiener-Urtext edition, which differs from G 28 in only two measures.)

Partita IV, BWV 828

The French ouverture movement—symbol of absolutist power and magnificence—establishes at the outset the grand quality of the D Major Partita; moreover, the Allemande and Gigue are the longest movements of their type among Bach's suites. One might suspect that the introduction of a French ouverture at the start of the second half of the six Partitas is

comparable to the later use of such a movement to open the second half of the Goldberg Variations (1741), but Bach may have now (1729) been planning to publish seven Partitas, as he announced in 1730. So a French Ouverture movement here may simply reflect Bach's desire for variety. Nonetheless, it seems clear that he intended the work as a whole to be a *Partita*, not a keyboard Ouverture Suite (as in *Clavierübung*, Part II), an orchestral form that did not adhere closely to the sequence of movements of the keyboard suite: the D Major Partita incorporates the entire core keyboard suite sequence of allemande-courante, sarabande-gigue (with interpolated *Galanterien* of Aria and Menuet between Sarabande and Gigue).

The Ouverture movement has the requisite two sections (without the optional recapitulation of part or all of the first). The first section, like that of the French Ouverture and Variation 16 of the Goldberg Variations, is in cut-time (that is, with two, not four beats to the measure), with dotted rhythms and sweeping runs; the second also follows the tradition by being fugal and in a fast triple meter, although $\frac{9}{8}$ is unusual. (These fast sections in Bach's ouverture movements, excluding that of the Goldberg Variations, are cast in the Italian ritornello form, with their contrast of "tutti" and "solo" sections perhaps inspired by the ouvertures of Telemann.) Of some interest is how Bach varies the texture of the fugue, with extended sections in two voices but with others that employ as many as four, plus occasional chords. There is a hint of the French *stile brisé* in this, although it is not used consistently.

The Allemande has an Italianate melody-dominated style that becomes increasingly more rhythmically complex as it unfolds. This is further underscored by the short-long Lombard rhythms, Italianate diminutions, and lack of French ornaments. The piece is notable for the number of recurrences of "A" section melodic material in the "B" section, not necessarily in the order in which it occurred (see mm 7ff. and 48. ff.; mm. 10ff. and mm. 45ff.; mm. 19ff. and mm. 50ff.) There is also a regularity of phrase structure already pointed out as one of the *galant* elements of musical style.

The Courante ($\frac{3}{2}$) is a true French courante, incorporating to a higher degree than usual for Bach the play between measures in the stated $\frac{3}{2}$ meter and those effectively in $\frac{6}{4}$ (the latter occurring in mm. 9-13 and 16 of the "A" section, for example).

The Sarabande begins in a high tessitura and works its way down, and also is a clear example of an early sonata form, since the opening measures are recapitulated exactly in mm. 29f., the second "theme" (in A major, mm. 9ff.) returning in the tonic in m. 35. The opening measures also have a stressed second beat typical of the sarabande.

As explained above, the Air, although printed before the Sarabande, is to be played after it. Despite its Italian title, it has a French wittiness with its syncopations and *stile brisé* textures—the piece is largely in two voices but has as many as six notes sounding at once. The Menuet is unusual in its unbalanced sections: "A" contains only 8 measures whereas "B" has twenty. Moreover, the piece begins right off with a hemiola—hemiolas are frequent in both menuet choreography and music, but rarely at the very opening. On the other hand, this opening 2-measure gesture also underscores that the menuet step takes up 6 beats, grouped variously.

The fugal Gigue is unique among the Partitas in its meter of $\frac{9}{16}$. Moreover, the "B" section is based not on the inversion of the "A" subject but an entirely new theme. However, in a particular stroke of originality, the A subject here reenters as a countersubject (m. 55) and near the end its last four bars are brought back in the highest, most audible voice (m. 86-9); the eight-measure coda that follows is then based on the first two measures of A subject.

Partita V, BWV 829

The opening movement of Partita V has the unhelpful title of "Praeambulum," which is so general as to be essentially meaningless. Its use here seems to be a forced effort to maintain the diversity in titles of opening movements. This is especially confounding because the movement in fact is a concerto ritornello movement in miniature, with the ritornello theme occurring at mm. 1 (G major), 17 (D major), 41 (E minor), and 65 (C major); however, a final ritornello is missing, although hinted at in the concluding descending G major scale. (There is even an opportunity for an improvised cadenza at the fermata in m. 86.)

The Allemande continues the trend throughout the Partitas towards increasing complexity, both in the extensive use of triplets, but also because of the very active bass voice. The Corrente in $\frac{3}{8}$ (not the usual $\frac{3}{4}$) is very violinistic in its melody of continuous 16th-notes that outline the harmony while the bass moves in eights; in the "B" section the roles are largely reversed, with some stretto-like passages near the end where both voices move in 16ths. The Sarabande begins in unorthodox manner with an upbeat, and dotted-rhythms prevail throughout. Of some interest is that Bach takes the trouble to distinguish between long and short appoggiaturas (m.2) and there are moments where forward motion is suspended to allow the melody voice a moment of free expression (mm. 28 and 36).

The Tempo di Minuetta (note spelling) is really not a menuet, despite its $\frac{3}{4}$ meter and 2-bar phrases; it is more a character piece than a dance. What Bach does here is lay a piece largely in an unwritten $\frac{6}{8}$ meter on a $\frac{3}{4}$ metrical grid, producing a long series of hemiolic measures that are normalized only at the ends of the two sections. These seems to be another example of Bach's wit at work, especially since the physical act of playing the music makes entertainingly visible the conflict between $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{6}{8}$. The passepied is often described as a fast menuet, and the $\frac{3}{8}$ meter is an indication of that. It often has a rustic or playful character (Johannes Mattheson refers to the passepied's "frivolousness") and lacks the refinement of the menuet. This is seen in the hidden parallel fifths in m. 2 and the opening of the "B" section (mm. 16f) when the two voices, separated by two and a half octaves leap towards each other only to land on notes producing a dissonant ninth. Moreover, from m. 31 to the end there is one dissonant interval after another—all obviously designed to give the work an unrefined character.

The Gigue in $\frac{6}{8}$ is typically fugal in texture, but here, as in the Gigue of Partita IV, the subject of the "B" section is new (common in French gigues); however, beginning in m. 45 Bach begins to combine the A and B themes to produce a true double-fugue texture, which gives it a genuinely German, and especially Bachian, caste.

Partita VI, BWV 830

Like Partita III, Partita VI has an earlier, untitled autograph version in the music book he gave to his wife Anna Magdalena in 1725. Moreover, like Partita III, this early version is missing a movement found in the later published Partita: the Air.

The Toccata that opens the Partita (titled "Prelude" in the early version) underwent revisions when incorporated into the Partita, but a change in the cut-time meter signature was not one of them. Moreover, the ¢ meter—with its implication of a fast tempo—continues through the long fugal section that concludes the movement.

Why Bach chose to Italianize the next movement's title to "Allemanda" is not known. (He had done that in the D Minor Partita for Violin, BWV 1004/1, but every movement's title is similarly Italianized in that work.) Texturally, the movement is not unlike that of Partita III, with its 4-note 32nd-note groups

and dotted 16th notes; but in this it strays far from the typical Allemande style of more or less constant 16th notes.

The Corrente has a history going back even before Anna Magdalena's music notebook, having an earlier manifestation as a keyboard solo movement in a violin and harpsichord sonata, BWV 1019a, which itself may go back to a yet earlier version. Like the Corrente of Partita V, it is in $\frac{3}{8}$ meter but rhythmically it is much more complicated, being dominated by syncopations and moments of 32nd-note scales and runs totally absent from the former. Note also that the opening of the B section involves an inversion of that of A.

The Sarabande begins with an (extremely rare) anacrusis, recalling the opening of the Partita. Here the elaborate 32nd-note diminutions in the melody recall the Corelli Adagio style, although French echos are heard in the dotted rhythms, grindingly dissonant harmonies, and ornaments on individual notes. Then again, there is a total absence of the stresses on second beats typical of the sarabande.

As with the Aria of Partita IV, the Air printed before the Sarabande should be performed after it. Why Bach chose the French term "Air" for a piece with little that is French about it is not known. Indeed, a reasonable argument could be made that he should have switched the titles "Aria" (Partita IV) and "Air" (Partita VI)! In any event, there are touches of Italianate (Scarlatti-ish?) virtuosity in the Air, notably with the extraordinarily large leaps in mm. 11 and 24-27. Notable also is the fact that the "B" section has first and second endings, the second being four measures longer than the first.

Just as the Tempo di Minuetta of Partita V is not a menuet, so too the Tempo di Gavotta (note the Italian ending) is not a gavotte, despite its cut-time meter, binary form, and opening on the second half of the measure. Lacking are the clear 4-measure phrases and the ending of phrases in mid-measure that are necessary to a gavotte. Moreover, the triplet rhythms are not characteristic. In fact, this movement, like the Corrente, was taken from the violin sonata BWV 1019a, where it had the title "Violino Solo. è Basso l'accompagnato." However, it, too, may have an earlier origin.

Nonetheless, the most interesting puzzle is posed by the Gigue, which in Anna Magdalena Bach's music book is given a cut-time meter signature. But here, instead of a regular meter signature that Bach's amateur players would understand, he uses an arcane symbol rooted in Renaissance proportional notation, namely a circle with a vertical stroke through it ⦶.
No doubt the meaning of that would have been as unknown to the musical amateurs of Bach's day as it is to the professional keyboardists of today. Because of the change in meter signature, Bach doubled here the note values of the earlier version. In effect, he transformed the Gigue from being in $\frac{2}{2}$ meter to $\frac{2}{1}$ meter, that is, the piece has two beats per measure, with the whole-note being one beat. This, of course, is much more difficult to read, which is another reason to wonder why Bach did this. Be that as it may, the Gigue is cast as a grand and weighty fugue, with the "A" section subject inverted for the "B" section. Tonally speaking, the movement concludes in m. 47 with the cadence on E minor, to which the next five bars serve as coda.

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1 "H" = *Handschrift* (manuscript). "17" refers to the enumeration of manuscript sources for the Partitas as given in the *Kritisches Bericht* (Critical Report) for Vol. V/1 of the *Neue-Bach Ausgabe* [NBA] (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1978), ed. R.D. Jones. H17 is in the Berlin State Library, cat. no. Mus. ms. Bach P 672. The early versions of the menuets in H 17 are printed in the *Kritisches Bericht*, 72f.

2 "G" = the *Gesamtausgabe* (Collected Edition) of the Partitas published initially in 1731 as Bach's Opus I. The exemplar G 26 is preserved at the Music Library of the University of Illinois (Urbana), cat. no. xq. 786. 41/B 12 cu. The ornamented version of Menuet II in G 26 is printed in R.D. Jones, *Nachtrag* (Supplement) to the *Kritisches Bericht* for Vol. V/1 of the *NBA* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1997), 14.

3 H 20 is preserved in the Berlin Staatsbibliothek under the siglum Ms. mus. Bach P 815. The ornamented version of the opening is printed in Jones (1997), 15.

YUAN SHENG *PIANIST*

Yuan Sheng has gained international recognition through his extensive performances in more than twenty countries. Mr. Sheng has performed in Carnegie Hall in New York, Cadogan Hall in London, Ford Performing Arts Center in Toronto, Seoul National Center for the Performing Arts as well as National Center for the Performing Arts, Forbidden City Concert Hall, Beijing Concert Hall in Beijing, and Shanghai Concert Hall in Shanghai, China. He has been heard and seen on WQXR in New York, WGBH in Boston,NPR in U.S.A, National Radio Station of Spain, National Radio Station of France, National Television of Poland, China Central TV, and Beijing Music Radio.

Mr. Sheng's performances and research on the music of Bach have attracted international attention in recent years. The New York Times said his Bach performance "were models of clarity, balance and proportion." The International Piano Magazine, considered Yuan Sheng "The nation (China)'s premier interpreter of Bach."

His understanding and command of harpsichord and early pianos has

also generated highest acclaim. He has performed the music of J.S.Bach and other Baroque composers on harpsichord regularly in recent years. In reviewing his recital of All-Beethoven program on an 1805 Kathonig piano, the Boston Intellegencer states that "Sheng had absorbed this music so thoroughly that a listener might easily have imagined the composer at the keyboard."

Mr. Sheng records under Piano Classics label. His two album recordings of works by Bach and a Three-Disc Set of works by Chopin performed on an 1845 Pleyel piano have been released internationally. Mr. Sheng's upcoming recording projects include all major works for keyboard by J.S. Bach on piano and complete works of Chopin on period instruments for Piano Classics. In addition, he will also record major keyboard works by Bach on harpsichord for NCPA Classics.

Yuan Sheng was a scholarship student of Solomon Mikowsky at the Manhattan School of Music in New York City, where he completed his Bachelor and Master of Music degrees. His interest in the music of Bach inspired him to study intensively with Rosalyn Tureck. During his early student years in China, he had studied with Qifang Li, Huili Li and Guangren Zhou respectively.

Yuan Sheng is a professor of piano at the Beijing Central Conservatory of Music.

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