

Øyvind Gimse

Johann Sebastian Bach

*Suites à Violoncello Solo
senza Basso,
BWV 1007–1012*

This recording is dedicated to my father, Odd Kåre Gimse, who loved Bach's music.

Why cello?

At music school they had violins and violas, flutes and clarinets, trumpets and trombones, guitars and pianos – so many great instruments to choose between.

*“I want to play the CELLO!”
... they didn't even have a teacher.
“I WANT TO play the cello!”*

The solution was a competent amateur. Per Engen, a bank employee and self-taught musician, the lone cellist in the local orchestra. It wasn't about pedagogy, it was about humanity. We would play a piece together, then play it again, and maybe one more time, if something wasn't quite right.

A small boy with an instrument that was too big for him, and his long-suffering kind parents, condemned to a life of driving him everywhere. The music school found a half-size cello at Skotterud, but my legs were so short that it dragged on the ground when I hauled it around. As soon as I had grown tall enough to keep it off the ground, I got a bigger instrument, so it was back to the case dragging along the ground.

Later I started getting music lessons at Eidskogen, a forty-minute drive each way, summer and winter. My dad normally drove, waiting patiently while I had my music lesson.

The journey home was best, with a quiet sense of companionship in the car. I got to play Bach's *Suite in G Major*, and my dad was contented. I used to practice in his study, while he smoked his pipe and corrected physics tests. He had heard his astronomy professor play Bach at Oslo University's observatory at Blindern, in a big silo-like room with fantastic acoustics. I tried to imagine what it sounded like; Bach under the starry skies.

There is something both universal and essentially human about Bach's cello suites. In spite of the similarities in their form and style, they have individual peculiarities and “personality”. It is easy to see patterns, but the music also provides wonderful opportunities for variations. Bach often has surprises up his sleeve, new perspectives that make the suites many-faceted, just like life itself.

Wherever I have travelled in the world, I have encountered Bach's cello suites, whether that is in European concert halls or in a favela in São Paulo, in a township in South Africa or a in music school in Yangon. For cellists, they are a global language, which provides a framework for a joint understanding of, and a shared discourse about, musical interpretation. Fortunately, there is no definitive right answer. It is precisely through constant reinterpretation that they can develop and live on, even three hundred years after they were created.

For me, that is the ultimate challenge: not to understand, but to really live and discover the

music anew each time, finding new details, new moments of light and dark. A journey into the essence of music is a journey into the human essence; the pulse that drives everything forwards, the pauses for breath that provide moments of peace. Phrases flow through music in the same way that our thoughts wander freely. I have no ambition to fully understand this music, in the same way that I think it is impossible to completely understand another person, but the suites are good companions on my musical journey through life. In the forty years that I have been working to figure them out, the fascination and love I feel towards them has only grown deeper.

I hope that this recording can transmit my personal and emotional connection with these fantastic cello suites, and that my interpretation of the spirit of Bach can provide pleasure, and perhaps some food for thought, to the people who hear it.

Because music should touch people, it should provoke a reaction. It does not have to be beautiful, it can equally well be melancholy as happy, challenging as calming. Above all it must be alive, in the same way that it should ideally be experienced attentively. The direct communication between the performer and listener is vital to the overall experience; noticing the musician's physical exertion, their breathing and proximity, not as an adornment to the music, but as something that illuminates the story being told.

As musicians, we are most naked and vulnerable when we are on stage, where we must believe in what we are doing, lay ourselves bare, be honest and be prepared for negative responses. I hope people will be able to sense that same honesty in this recording.

All people make mistakes, so why shouldn't musicians? Perhaps the most beautiful moments arise precisely where something is on the verge of going wrong? Can we perceive anything as beautiful if there is nothing we consider ugly?

So I hope that my playing will be like morning dew and budding flowers, but also like night frost and decay. Hopefully my listeners will also detect the sound of the deep forests of Kongsvinger and the skerries and small islands off Grimstad, giving them a sense of both a harsh climate and human warmth. Bach's music is a reflection of life itself, and I hope that when you listen to this recording you will hear how my life has shaped my Bach suites. I am certainly eternally grateful to Bach.

This recording was done in Hof Church during the tranquillity of the pandemic, in the summer and autumn of 2020. Geir Inge Lotsberg has created an honest and authentic sound, and throughout the process he was a fantastic musical and personal pillar of support.

I would not have become the musician I am without the many people who have helped me in their different ways, and above all my cello teachers:

PER ENGEN (1977-79) incredibly kind and caring
TORD ERIKSSON (1979-1981) started to demand something of me

CAROL CHURCH (1981-82) bubbling with enthusiasm

ØRNULF JEMTLAND (1982-85) each lesson was full of stories and anecdotes

ANNE-BRITT SÆVIC ÅRDAL (1985-87) a musical spring

AAGE KVALBEIN (1987-88) incredibly fun and inspiring

WALTER NOTHAS (1988-91/93) put my house in order!

Important master classes/short study visits that have had an impact on me in different ways:

FRANS HELMERSON musical dramaturgy

HEINRICH SCHIFF vibrato

BORIS PERGAMENSCHIKOW creating timbre

MSTISLAV ROSTROPOVITSJ telling stories

ANDRAS MIHALY musical structure

SANDOR VEGH musical intuition

WILLIAM PLEETH playfulness

TRULS MØRK expression

Vitalizing sources of inspiration whom I have been lucky enough to spend time with in person:

STEIN RØE the (children's) choir conductor who was the most important reason I became a musician

LEIF JØRGENSEN brought musical imagination to a new level

IONA BROWN made an immature teenager understand how incredibly hard you must work to become good

ANNE-SOPHIE MUTTER who for 24 years has treated me with enormous kindness and respect, at both a professional and personal level

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Suites à Violoncello Solo senza Basso, BWV 1007–1012

Øyvind Gimse, Cello

VOLUME 1

Suite No. 1 in G major, BWV 1007

1 <i>Prelude</i>	02:18
2 <i>Allemande</i>	04:00
3 <i>Courante</i>	02:38
4 <i>Sarabande</i>	02:28
5 <i>Minuet I/II</i>	02:57
6 <i>Gigue</i>	01:45

Suite No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1008

7 <i>Prelude</i>	03:36
8 <i>Allemande</i>	03:19
9 <i>Courante</i>	02:14
10 <i>Sarabande</i>	04:01
11 <i>Minuet I/II</i>	03:26
12 <i>Gigue</i>	02:52

Suite No. 3 in C major, BWV 1009

13 <i>Prelude</i>	03:19
14 <i>Allemande</i>	03:26
15 <i>Courante</i>	03:25
16 <i>Sarabande</i>	03:27
17 <i>Bourrée I/II</i>	03:35
18 <i>Gigue</i>	03:16

Recorded at Hof Church, Solør during summer and fall 2020 by Geir Inge Lotsberg.

Portrait: Peter Adamik
Translation: Språkverkstaden

VOLUME 2

Suite No. 4 in Eb major, BWV 1010

1 <i>Prelude</i>	03:54
2 <i>Allemande</i>	03:54
3 <i>Courante</i>	03:28
4 <i>Sarabande</i>	04:34
5 <i>Bourrée I/II</i>	04:36
6 <i>Gigue</i>	02:53

Suite No. 5 in C minor, BWV 1011

7 <i>Prelude</i>	05:55
8 <i>Allemande</i>	04:50
9 <i>Courante</i>	02:07
10 <i>Sarabande</i>	02:48
11 <i>Gavotte I/II</i>	04:35
12 <i>Gigue</i>	02:09

Suite No. 6 in D major, BWV 1012

13 <i>Prelude</i>	04:29
14 <i>Allemande</i>	06:59
15 <i>Courante</i>	03:48
16 <i>Sarabande</i>	04:23
17 <i>Gavotte I/II</i>	04:29
18 <i>Gigue</i>	04:22

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