

Bach – Cello Suites (Casals) [1997]

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Bach – Cello Suites (Casals) [1997]



Disc 1 Cello Suite No. 1 in G major, BWV 1007 1. *I. Prelude* 00:02:29 2. *II. Allemande* 00:03:42 3. *III. Courante* 00:02:32 4. *IV. Sarabande* 00:02:24 5. *V. Menuet I and II* 00:03:13 6. *VI. Gigue* 00:01:54 Cello Suite No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1008 7. *I. Prelude* 00:03:42 8. *II. Allemande* 00:03:53 9. *III. Courante* 00:02:14 10. *IV. Sarabande* 00:04:04 11. *V. Menuet I and II* 00:03:17 12. *VI. Gigue* 00:02:33 Cello Suite No. 3 in C major, BWV 1009 13. *I. Prelude* 00:03:28 14. *II. Allemande* 00:03:42 15. *III. Courante* 00:03:11 16. *IV. Sarabande* 00:03:29 17. *V. Bourree I and II* 00:03:24 18. *VI. Gigue* 00:03:02 Disc 2 Cello Suite No. 4 in E flat major, BWV 1010 1. *I. Prelude* 00:04:16 2. *II. Allemande* 00:03:50 3. *III. Courante* 00:03:57 4. *IV. Sarabande* 00:04:09 5. *V. Bourree I and II* 00:03:40 6. *VI. Gigue* 00:02:38 Cello Suite No. 5 in C minor, BWV 1011 7. *I. Prelude* 00:07:23 8. *II. Allemande* 00:03:22 9. *III. Courante* 00:02:05 10. *IV. Sarabande* 00:02:47 11. *V. Gavotte I and II* 00:04:33 12. *VI. Gigue* 00:02:25 Cello Suite No. 6 in D major, BWV 1012 13. *I. Prelude* 00:05:09 14. *II. Allemande* 00:07:35 15. *III. Courante* 00:03:44 16. *IV. Sarabande* 00:04:20 17. *V. Gavotte I and II* 00:03:11 18. *VI. Gigue* 00:04:04 Pablo Casals – cello

No conversation about historic recordings of J.S. Bach's music can begin to take flight without mention of Pablo Casals' early discs of the Six Suites for Solo Cello. And no musician has been more closely associated with the Suites than the Catalan cellist who first discovered a dusty score of the set in a small shop on a Barcelona side street. That was in 1890, just as he was entering his teens. Casals would later tour them in the interwar years, eventually giving them relative permanence on record, both in sessions at Abbey Road and in Paris (1936-39).

Watch him perform the first half of the opening Suite in this documentary footage taken in the

French abbey pictured to the left, in 1954.

It's important to remember the 1930s as a decade of certain striving for classical music in the studio. Only to scratch the surface: In that period we find Edwin Fischer carrying out the first complete recordings of Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier on the piano (1934-36). For his own part, pianist Arthur Schnabel sat down in the studio to capture the first complete cycle of the Beethoven sonatas (1932-35). So it is that Casals' recordings of the Six Suites take their place somewhere alongside those historic studio performances of the "48" and the "32," respectively, the so-called "Old Testament" and "New Testament" of keyboard literature.

But when Casals set up to put down the complete performances of Bach's music for solo cello, the six suites were not yet part of a fixed tradition of any kind. If it's true that tradition can never quite properly be called fixed, it's still the case that unlike Fischer's contemporaneous recordings of Bach, or Schnabel's of Beethoven, Casals was not putting his stamp on works that were considered part of a perceived "canon" as such. Few, at the time, were at all familiar with the Cello Suites. It was through Casals that they saw the light of day for the very first time, and it was Casals who illuminated the road for cellists and audiences to come.

In his memoirs, *Licht und Schatten* (Light and Shadow), Casals expresses the state of neglect into which the suites had fallen: *"These suites had been deemed academic rubbish, mechanical studies without musical warmth – can you imagine that? How could they be considered cold – these works, that positively radiate poetry, warmth and feeling of sound? They are the quintessence of Bach's work as a composer – and Bach is the quintessence of all music."*
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