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# J. S. BACH

## English Suites Nos. 4–6

### Arranged for Two Guitars

## Montenegrin Guitar Duo



## Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) English Suites Nos. 4–6, BWV 809–811 (Arranged for two guitars by the Montenegrin Guitar Duo)

The *English Suites* is the title given to a set of six suites for keyboard believed to have been composed between 1720 and the early 1730s. During this period, Bach also explored the suite form in the six *French Suites* and the seven large suites under the title of *Partitas* (six in all) and an *Ouverture*. His other suites include the renowned solo *Violin Sonatas and Partitas, BWV 1001–1006*, and the *Cello Suites, BWV 1007–1012*, as well as the *Lute Suites, BWV 995–1000*, and *1006a* (probably composed for the lute-harpsichord), the *Partita, BWV 1013* for flute, and the *Suites, BWV 818* and *819*.

Bach's explorations of the structural and expressive possibilities of the suite form were therefore very extensive. The suites proved to be remarkably versatile musical creations encompassing a wide range of moods and styles from the dance idioms, *allemande*, *courante*, *bourrée*, and *gigue*, to the quasi-improvisatory *préludes* and the pensive intensity of the slow dance movement, the *sarabande*.

The *English Suites* are distinct from Bach's other suites by the extended opening *Préludes* in all but the first suite. The *Prélude* is followed by an *Allemande*, *Courante*, *Sarabande* and *Gigue*, the last of these being preceded by an additional pair of movements, varying in each instance.

*Suite No. 4* is the shortest of the *English Suites* and the only one in a major key. The *Prélude* is virtuosic with an almost orchestral complexity of timbre and texture. The *Allemande*, the German dance, begins with triplet semiquavers and an imitative structure as the voices flow back and forth. The second half is more restrained after a lively opening. The *Courante* opens with twinkling brilliance, a most animated conversation, the parts being perfectly balanced. The *Sarabande* is intricately varied in note values with scope for imaginative embellishment.

Two *Menuets* follow, each characterised by a lively driving bass and a lyrical simplicity in the melodic treble part. Finally, the *Gigue* opens with a hunting motif. The

Bach scholar, David Schulenberg has observed that while the beginning of the *Gigue* presents a normal three-part fugal exposition, from then on, no more than two voices are heard at a time.

*English Suite No. 5*, originally in E minor but played on the guitar in B minor, begins with an extended *Prélude* in the form of a true fugue, building from its opening theme and modulating through a number of keys in a contrasting middle section before returning to the original motif. The *Allemande* is also fugal. Following the plaintive sonorities of the beginning, the second half of the movement in contrast contains some interesting dissonances.

This *Courante* is an exuberant dance propelled forward by energetic rhythmic patterns and some rapturous ornamentation. In each half, the onward momentum of the two-part counterpoint is relieved at particular moments by concise phrases played over a simple dominant pedal accompaniment before the contrapuntal aspects resume. The *Sarabande*, in a three-part texture, has many intriguing features including a free-flowing bass line and a poignant melodic line.

The *passepied* (popular as a French court dance and instrumental form, and a quicker version of the *menuet*) was frequently put to good use in French operas and ballets. In the late Baroque keyboard suites it became customary for them to appear in pairs. The first *Passepied* in this suite is in *rondeau* form. The bright and brisk nature of the *passepied* is well represented here in the *rondeau* with *Passepied II* providing a contrast in both a relaxation of tempo and a change to the major key from the minor. The *Gigue* here is in three-part fugal writing the first half consisting of two complete expositions separated by a brief episode. The second half begins in the bass gradually ascending in pitch and dramatic vitality, the finale being rounded off with climactic chords.

*English Suite No. 6* opens in chorale style in 9/8 time

with elegantly broken chords. This is interrupted by a sudden burst of semiquavers leading to a moment's reflection before plunging into an extended and brilliant fugal *Allegro*. Of the *Préludes* in the *English Suites* this is the longest and most elaborate. The *Allemande* which follows is, in comparison, an oasis of calm, with superb contrapuntal writing and ingenious tonal modulations. The *Courante* unites a French-style melodic line with a sparkling walking bass. After the restrained eloquence of the *Allemande* this movement seems to imply its own celebration of Bachian *joie de vivre*.

The *Sarabande*, in 3/2, has a hymn-like grandeur and dignity, The *Double* extends the emotional range with an interwoven texture creating a fine tapestry of sonorities.

The contrasting pair of *Gavottes* with a perky walking bass accompaniment brings in the atmosphere of a pastoral dance in the market square. The second *Gavotte* evokes images of wind instruments piping together in rustic chorus.

The *Gigue*, in 12/16 metre, is virtuosic in both compositional aspects and the technical demands on the performers. Bach's incomparable art of fugal writing is at full stretch here, the second half representing, as in mirror images, inversions of the exposition of the opening first section. The magnificence of the trills at strategic points is matched by the driving thrust of the triplets in perpetual motion building up to a dramatic finale.

Graham Wade

### Montenegrin Guitar Duo

The Montenegrin Guitar Duo is frequently invited to venues such as the Philharmonia Hall in Saint Petersburg, Manuel de Falla Hall in Madrid, and the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam. International festivals regularly engage the duo to give recitals, deliver lectures and masterclasses, and adjudicate major competitions. In 2013 their debut album was released by the Montenegrin Music Centre, featuring works by Domeniconi, Piazzolla and Bogdanović. The first of their two volumes of Bach's *English Suites* was released by Naxos in 2015 and received excellent reviews.

**Goran Krivokapić**, a leading international guitarist, has won first prize at 19 prestigious international competitions. He has performed all over the world, appearing at concert halls such as the Tchaikovsky Hall in Moscow, Lubkowitz Palace in Vienna and the Auditorio Conde Duque in Madrid. Krivokapić teaches guitar at Fontys School of the Arts in Tilburg, Netherlands and at LUCA School of Arts in Leuven, Belgium.

**Danijel Cerović** lectures in guitar and chamber music at the Music Academy in Cetinje, University of Montenegro. A versatile solo and chamber musician, he is also on the artistic board of the Montenegrin Music Centre and the Montenegrin Symphony Orchestra. Cerović is an active contributor to the organisation of numerous international music events, and founded the Nikšić Guitar Festival and Competition.

[www.montenegringuitar duo.com](http://www.montenegringuitar duo.com)

**Note:** The sound image in this recording places Danijel Cerović in the left channel, and Goran Krivokapić on the right.



**Danijel Cerović and Goran Krivokapić**

*Photo: Sebastian Schloen*

The versatility of the suite form proved well suited to Johann Sebastian Bach in his instrumental works, and the *English Suites* are no exception. These are distinct from Bach's other suites with their quasi-improvisatory opening *Preludes*, and further movements encompassing a wide range of moods and styles from lively dances to the pensive intensity of the slow *Sarabandes*. The Montenegrin Guitar Duo's fresh and historically informed performances of these works have been acclaimed as "simply ravishing" (*American Record Guide*). Volume 1 of this two-volume series can be heard on Naxos 8.573473.



**Johann Sebastian  
BACH**  
(1685–1750)



**English Suites Nos. 4–6**

(Arranged for two guitars by the Montenegrin Guitar Duo)

<b>English Suite No. 4</b> <b>in C major,</b> <b>BWV 809</b>		<b>English Suite No. 5</b> <b>in B minor,</b> <b>BWV 810</b>		<b>English Suite No. 6</b> <b>in A minor,</b> <b>BWV 811</b>	
<b>1</b> Prélude	<b>4:30</b>	<b>7</b> Prélude	<b>5:01</b>	<b>13</b> Prélude	<b>7:50</b>
<b>2</b> Allemande	<b>3:30</b>	<b>8</b> Allemande	<b>3:19</b>	<b>14</b> Allemande	<b>3:34</b>
<b>3</b> Courante	<b>1:26</b>	<b>9</b> Courante	<b>2:04</b>	<b>15</b> Courante	<b>2:25</b>
<b>4</b> Sarabande	<b>2:07</b>	<b>10</b> Sarabande	<b>2:46</b>	<b>16</b> Sarabande	<b>2:33</b>
<b>5</b> Menuet I & II	<b>2:47</b>	<b>11</b> Passepied I & II	<b>3:08</b>	<b>17</b> Double	<b>2:48</b>
<b>6</b> Gigue	<b>3:08</b>	<b>12</b> Gigue	<b>2:46</b>	<b>18</b> Gavotte I & II	<b>3:48</b>
				<b>19</b> Gigue	<b>3:46</b>



**WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDINGS**  
**Montenegrin Guitar Duo**  
**Goran Krivokapić • Danijel Cerović**

Recorded at St John Chrysostom Church, Newmarket, Ontario, Canada, 27–30 October 2016  
Producers: Norbert Kraft & Bonnie Silver • Engineer & Editor: Norbert Kraft • Strings: Savarez  
Guitars: Andres D. Marvi, Granada (GK) • Booklet notes: Graham Wade • This recording is co-financed  
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Cover photo of Montenegrin Guitar Duo by Sebastian Schloen



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Playing Time  
63:39



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