



BACH Complete Solo Cello Suites
AILBHE MCDONAGH



STEINWAY & SONS

BACH CELLO SUITES

Bach's Cello Suites are some of the most beautiful, challenging, and complex works composed for the instrument. Bach's ability to create counterpoint on a solo instrument is astounding. He really makes the cello sound like an orchestra rather than just one instrument.

Composers the world over (myself included) have been inspired by him to compose solo suites for the cello. The variety of characters, moods, rhythmic interest and phrase structure heard in these suites keep the performer engaged and eager to perform these works over and over again.

From my earliest days as a cellist, I had always hoped to make a recording of the Bach Cello Suites. To date, there are no published recordings of these pieces by an Irish cellist, and I think that it is important to have



a record of how an Irish cellist would perform these iconic works. This recording, for me, needed to have the raw, true sound of how I perform the Bach Cello Suites in concert. You can hear it here on a modern instrument (Postacchini cello) with a modern bow (Noel Burke) in the modern tuning that is standard in the Republic of Ireland (442).

In this recording, my aim was to have a very distinct musical character for each movement. It was important that each dance movement should feel different from the previous one to ensure that the vibrancy of Bach's music was always alive. I enjoyed having an almost 'Irish Jig' feel (from Irish traditional music) in all of the Gigue movements. This project was a wonderful experience for me, as was working with the incredible Steinway label. I hope you enjoy listening to this recording.

– *Ailbhe McDonagh*

AILBHE MCDONAGH

has earned international recognition as both a soloist and chamber musician. According to *Fanfare Magazine*, “she plays with flawless technique, faultless intonation, and a strong yet meltingly sweet tone”. Ailbhe has performed at Carnegie Hall, the Yale Norfolk Festival, and the Schleswig Holstein Music Festival. She has given performances for the Irish President at Áras an Uachtaráin, appears regularly on national television and radio, and her recordings have been broadcast worldwide.

As an accomplished chamber musician, Ailbhe collaborates with the acclaimed pianist John O’Conor, with her sister Orla McDonagh, and with violinist Lynda O’Connor. She is a member of the Ficino Ensemble and the traditional Irish music crossover group Trio Elatha.

In addition to her performance career, Ailbhe is an established composer published by Boosey & Hawkes. Her compositions have been featured in syllabi worldwide, and she has received commissions from

festivals in Ireland, USA and Europe. Her debut orchestral work *Irish Isles Suite* was recorded and released by the RTÉ Concert Orchestra in 2023.

Ailbhe has been a member of the Strings faculty at the Royal Irish Academy of Music since 2010. She is also in demand as a masterclass instructor.

Her debut solo album, *It’s a Cello Thing* (2012), was named CD of the Week on Ireland’s national classical music station, RTÉ Lyric FM. Her 2020 album, *Skellig*, was featured in the *Irish Examiner’s* Top Albums of the Year.

In 2021, Ailbhe released *Beethoven: Complete Cello Sonatas* with John O’Conor on the Steinway label. *Classical Music Sentinel* states “McDonagh and O’Conor coalesce perfectly, as if propelled by the music’s undertow, and echo each other’s expressive mien with dynamic balance” and proclaims it as one of their Essential Recordings. *All Music Guide* gave the album 4.5 out of 5 stars.

The present album is the first published recording of Bach’s complete Cello Suites by an Irish cellist. Ailbhe performs on an Andrea Postacchini cello from 1833.



Cello Suite No. 1
in G major, BWV 1007

- 1 I. Prelude 2:28
- 2 II. Allemande 4:25
- 3 III. Courante 3:14
- 4 IV. Sarabande 3:17
- 5 V. Minuet I & Minuet II 3:28
- 6 VI. Gigue 1:50

Cello Suite No. 2
in D minor, BWV 1008

- 7 I. Prelude 3:33
- 8 II. Allemande 3:42
- 9 III. Courante 2:31
- 10 IV. Sarabande 5:19
- 11 V. Minuet I & Minuet II 3:03
- 12 VI. Gigue 2:42

Cello Suite No. 3
in C major, BWV 1009

- 13 I. Prelude 3:36
- 14 II. Allemande 3:49
- 15 III. Courante 3:32
- 16 IV. Sarabande 4:13
- 17 V. Bourrée I & Bourrée II 3:47
- 18 VI. Gigue 3:25

Cello Suite No. 4
in E flat major, BWV 1010

- 19 I. Prelude 3:52
- 20 II. Allemande 4:16
- 21 III. Courante 3:48
- 22 IV. Sarabande 4:52
- 23 V. Bourrée I & Bourrée II 5:38
- 24 VI. Gigue 3:05

Cello Suite No. 5
in C minor, BWV 1011

- 25 I. Prelude 6:21
- 26 II. Allemande 6:32
- 27 III. Courante 2:45
- 28 IV. Sarabande 4:54
- 29 V. Gavotte I & Gavotte II 4:47
- 30 VI. Gigue 2:18

Cello Suite No. 6
in D major, BWV 1012

- 31 I. Prelude 4:42
- 32 II. Allemande 8:11
- 33 III. Courante 4:12
- 34 IV. Sarabande 5:18
- 35 V. Gavotte I & Gavotte II 4:21
- 36 VI. Gigue 4:14

Playing Time 146:58

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