

Georg Philip
TELEMANN
Six Overtures

Gaku Nakagawa, Harpsichord



Georg Philipp Telemann (1681–1767) Six Ouwertures, TWV 32:5–10

Georg Philipp Telemann was born in Magdeburg in 1681. Discouraged by his family from pursuing a career in music, he taught himself to play diverse instruments and acquired skill in musical composition. After coming to Leipzig as a law student in 1701, he founded a Collegium Musicum there, a society consisting of music-loving students, which gave public concerts, and subsequently he was employed as an organist and music director at the Neukirche in Leipzig in 1704. He soon moved to Sorau in Lower Lusatia (now Żary in eastern Poland) to become Kapellmeister to Count Erdmann II of Promnitz, then in 1708 to Eisenach, where he served as Konzertmeister and Kapellmeister and provided quantities of vocal works, including four or five annual cycles of cantatas. In 1712, he assumed the post of director for the city music and Kapellmeister at Barfüsserkirche in Frankfurt am Main. In 1721, he was appointed Kantor of the Johanneum, Hamburg's oldest Latin school and of the five principal churches of the city, subsequently also serving as director of Gänsemarktoper. Telemann devoted more than half of his long life to enriching the musical life of the Hanseatic city until his death in 1767, when he was succeeded as musical director by his godson, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714–1788).

Telemann was among the most famed and prolific composers of his time. His compositions encompass virtually all genres and instrumentations known in his time and easily outnumber 3000. He was also ambitious in publishing his own works, often engraving them himself. The prints saw widespread circulation throughout Europe. In spite of the fame he enjoyed during his life, he was neglected as a superficial polygraph in the 19th century, when Bach and Handel were reappraised. The reevaluation of Telemann's music had to wait until the first half of the 20th century.

The *Sechs Ouvertüren* was published sometime between 1741 and 1749, by Balthasar Schmid in Nürnberg, one of the best-known figures in German musical publishing

of the day, who had also engraved Bach's *Goldberg Variations* (1741). On the title page appears: *VI. Ouverturen nebst zween Folgesätzen bey jedweder, Französisch, Polnisch oder sonst tändelnd, und Welsch. fürs CLAVIER verfertigt von Telemann* ('Six Ouwertures, with two following movements, each in French, Polish or otherwise playful, and Italian manner, composed for Clavier by Telemann').

The term '*Ouverture*' can generally mean either the first movement of an *Ouverture-Suite* or the entire set of the suite. However, unlike the usual *Ouverture-Suite* consisting of an opening *Ouverture* and various dance movements, only three make each cycle of our *Six Ouwertures*. The second and third are not typical dances such as *Allemande* or *Courante*, instead slow and fast pieces respectively. The result is an amalgam of French *Ouverture-Suite* and Italianate three-movement concerto or sonata with a mixed taste: it is shorter and more concise than the former and richer in diverse national characteristics than the latter.

The French *Ouverture* is generally made of three sections, namely a slow and solemn introductory beginning (with characteristic dotted rhythm in most cases), fast and lively fugal middle part, and a return of the first section (mostly short). Telemann studied the genre closely through works of Lully and Campra among other French composers, while serving as Kapellmeister to Count Erdmann II of Promnitz, who had been travelling in France and developed a taste for the music of that country. Telemann recalled later in his life that he had composed 200 *ouvertures* in just two years during the service. He was indeed a great admirer of French music ('Je suis grand Partisan de la Musique Française'), as he confessed in a French letter to his friend and prolific writer on music in Hamburg, Johann Mattheson. Johann Joachim Quantz, who was the flutist in the French-oriented court of Frederick the Great, named Telemann (along with Handel) as German composers who surpassed Lully in writing *ouvertures*.

Of the *Ouwertures*, 13 is special in that it has Italianate pompous slow sections without typical French dotted rhythm. 4 is without a concluding slow section, and its middle fugal section, beginning with a leaping cheerful theme, turns into an even more joyful play with arpeggiated chords. 7 has a fugal section with the rhythm reminiscent of a French Gigue in 6/4. The fugal part of dramatic 16 ends abruptly without a cadence and plunges tragically into the unexpected final section.

The second movements are honest reflection of Telemann's preference for Polish folk music, whose 'true barbaric beauty' impressed him during his visit to Kraków and Pless with the aforementioned Count. The composer found much good musical material hidden in the music.

The middle movements of *Ouwertures Nos. 1 to 5* all have *scherzando* in their titles. The *tändelnd* or playful character of these pieces can be found in sudden change of rhythmic gestures, syncopations, repetition of notes, *Schleifer* (a kind of fast upward ornaments), and turning motifs. 2 has a strong resemblance to the opening section of Telemann's *Ouverture à la polonoise* for harpsichord in

Der getreue Music-Meister (published in 1728/1729), the first music periodical in Germany. Though not specifically indicated, 5 is most similar to a kind of dance called a polonaise. *Pastorello* 17 is a unique piece, with its bass imitating the drone of a bagpipe, which attracted the ears of the curious composer during his time in Poland.

Next to French and Polish music comes Italian music as an indispensable source of Telemann's musical ideas. 3 is a comical *Allegro* with some keyboard idioms not so often seen in Telemann. 6 is a concerto with dazzling brightness alternating between *ritornello* and solo. 9 is a gavotte-like lively piece which has a contrast between its outer parts filled with constantly moving quavers and its middle part with triplets. 12 has a concerto form. In its middle part (*Piacevole*), a short solo accompanied by arpeggiated chords, enharmonic equivalents (B flat and A sharp, E flat and D sharp) are skillfully used to enable surprising harmonic turns. 15 can be called a Gigue or Giga. 18 shows the influence of Italian opera buffa.

Gaku Nakagawa

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Gaku Nakagawa was born in 1993 in Ise, Japan. He began to play the piano at the age of four. In 2012 he entered the University of Tokyo to study philosophy. Without ever having a harpsichord lesson, he became the first prize winner of the 27th YAMANASHI, Japan, international competition for early music in 2014. In 2016 he was invited to study the harpsichord for one year with Prof. Glen Wilson at the Musikhochschule Würzburg, who was a member of the jury at the competition. This is Gaku Nakagawa's debut recording.



Photo by Takashi Nakagawa

Telemann was among the most admired and prolific of composers and his compositions encompass virtually all genres and instrumentations known in his lifetime. The *Six Overtures*, strangely neglected for many years, reveal his inventive and imaginative writing for solo harpsichord. They contain elements that suggest an amalgam of French and Italianate influences, whether *ouverture-suite* or three-movement concerto or sonata. Also evident, in the central movements, is Telemann's preference for Polish folk music, of whose 'true barbaric beauty' he was an ardent admirer.

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Six Overtures

Ouverture No. 1 in G minor, TWV 32:5		Ouverture No. 4 in E minor, TWV 32:8	
1 Ouverture	4:05	10 Ouverture	4:32
2 Larghetto e scherzando	2:52	11 Moderato e scherzando	2:36
3 Allegro	2:58	12 Allegro–piacevole–allegro	4:20
Ouverture No. 2 in A major, TWV 32:6		Ouverture No. 5 in E flat major, TWV 32:9	
4 Ouverture	3:32	13 Ouverture	4:17
5 Largo e scherzando	2:40	14 Suave e scherzando	2:51
6 Presto	4:08	15 Vivace	3:12
Ouverture No. 3 in F major, TWV 32:7		Ouverture No. 6 in B minor, TWV 32:10	
7 Ouverture	4:46	16 Ouverture	4:44
8 Dolce e scherzando	2:42	17 Pastorello, tempo giusto	2:59
9 Allegro	3:11	18 Allegro	3:40

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