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Prelude: The Prelude evolved from lutenists' checking the tuning of their instruments. It usually has a quasi-improvised quality, but Bach's are preponderantly far more tightly structured than earlier examples. The G Major *Prelude* has often been cited as an example of musical verisimilitude, or "tone painting." It sounds like flowing water – the representation of a brook, or *Bach*, in German – and most of his musical signature (minus the first letter) appears in its first two measures, thus identifying this music as in some way an autobiographical statement. His incomplete signature "A-C-H," contained in the key of G Major, is also the syllable of a cry of despair, and consistent with a symbolic representation of himself as "incomplete" since he had very recently and suddenly become a widower (1720). The mournful D Minor *Prelude* written the following year (1721) further underscores Bach's sense of incompleteness through his leaving its last five measures unrealized. They are written as simple chords in dotted half notes, left to the performer to improvise upon, thus demanding a second party to "complete" him; it possibly stands as a symbol of Bach's acknowledging his readiness to remarry, which in fact he does that December. The third *Prelude*, in C Major, is almost always played very majestically in deference to Pablo Casals's express instructions not to give way to the impulse to play it quickly. But his instructions contradict an indication in the oldest surviving copy of this music to play it *Presto* (the Kellner manuscript, copied out from the now-lost original manuscript by one of Bach's students).

Allemande: The Allemande, or German dance, is represented by Michael Praetorius in *Syntagma Musicum* (1619) as having the quality of melancholy, and is performed slowly. Mattheson elaborates upon this by describing it as: "'broken' [that is, performed in the lutenist's *Style Brise*], serious, well-elaborated [this refers to the rhetorical '*elaboratio*' of oratory, and has nothing whatever to do with melodic embellishment], and delighting in good order and repose." This is all true of the G Major *Allemande*, an example of one form of the dance – unique among all the courtly dances – requiring the man and woman to remain with their hands joined throughout the length of the dance, a sort of institutionalized flirtation. The D Minor *Allemande* of BWV 1008, however, is an example of an alternative form of the dance, a line dance performed by an asymmetrical number of men and women – one fewer women than men – in which the "odd man out" at one point attempts to steal another's partner (Arbeau). The distinctive (singular among all the Allemandes of the six suites) flurry of thirty-second notes in measure 9, standing out from the rest of this dance's texture, is a musical representation in this case of a short, mad scramble for a partner, employed autobiographically as a charming *topos* representing Bach's readiness to remarry. This little melisma moreover seems to serve as a generative melodic cell, upon which the following *Courante* is built, and it reappears in the prelude of the Fifth Cello Suite in C Minor, where it is used again in the same way to build the following fugue.

Courante: The twentieth-century fashion, after Casals, of treating all the courantes in the Cello Suites as though they were Italian correntes, that is, very sprightly running dances, appears to be a simplification not supported by original sources. The courante was,

according to D'Alembert in Diderot's *Encyclopedie*, the *slowest* dance in the French suite – in fact, described as a slower sort of sarabande. Mattheson elaborates with the description of it as: 'charming, tender, something courageous, something desirous, and expressing sweet hope.' He also characterizes it as being "the masterpiece of the lute;" this clue is of tremendous importance for the cellist, who is evidently required to harmonically amplify the texture using the lutenist's *Brise* style of improvisation, with its broken arpeggios and drones, while interpolating ornamental counterpoint. It may also serve to enjoin us not to rule out playing this music *pizzicato*, plucked rather than bowed. The cellist may make legitimate arguments in favor of interpreting the G Major Suite's courante either as a corrente or as one of the very slow French courantes; its relative complexity of rhythm identifies it immediately as quite different from both courantes of the next two suites. Although Winold acknowledges only the Fifth Suite's as a slow French courante, it may be noted that rhythmic textures of the first, fourth, fifth and sixth courantes all have much in common. With their perpetually running eighth notes, however, the second and third are indisputably Italian correntes – the very fastest dances in the suite form. We therefore have two dances – of the same name – at opposite ends of the affective spectrum; dances tending to assert contrasting characters across borders occur frequently during this period.

Sarabande: The *Sarabande* originated as an African dance imported to South America via the slave trade, and was performed as a fast, erotic dance there until banned by the Church as "inciting the populace to riot." By the time it had reached Europe, a few years before Bach's birth, the sarabande had taken on a slow, courtly austerity, while still retaining its characteristic rhythm of quarter / dotted-quarter / eighth // quarter / quarter / quarter. In France it bifurcated into two dances, the *Sarabande grave* and the *Sarabande tendre*, both of which are slow, and apparently danced *solitaire*. Cardinal Richelieu is reported to have danced the sarabande wearing bells and castanets (!) The only *Sarabande tendre* amongst the six cello suites appears in the Fifth in C Minor; it dispenses with the characteristic dotted rhythm, progressing by more even note values. It is somewhat faster than the *Grave*. Mattheson wrote of the sarabande: "The same has no other passion to express than ambition; yet therein are higher sorts to be discerned, so that the dance finds itself in a more select, therefore more pompous, state than the others. Because it permits of no running notes, since the *grandezza* abhors such, its severity is maintained." (As a movement in a suite written to the memory of Bach's wife, I have taken the liberty of somewhat tempering its severity with an introspective melancholy. This is entirely in keeping with the crossing of genre lines for which Bach is noted by his contemporaries, including Mattheson and Scheibe, in very unflattering terms, and is one dance in which I have taken this license, consistent with my personal understanding of Bach's intent here, rather than relying upon Mattheson's typology.)

Menuet: The *Menuet*, like the other *Galanterien* of the Six Cello Suites, namely bourrees and gavottes, is a dance with which most liberties were traditionally taken, and Bach crosses genre lines here dramatically in both the first and second suites. These particular menuetti do not conform to Mattheson's characterization of the dance as expressing 'moderate gaiety;' rather, they are the specific movements in which Bach most transparently expresses the grief at his bereavement. The G Major minuet opens with a

reflection of the opening of the suite's Prelude, but in an ambiguous meter. The first two measures of the dance sound as though written in a duple meter, then the third and fourth establish the requisite triple time. Thus the effect is 2+2+2+3+3, or a symbol of the "Holy Trinity" in which Father is emphasized over Son and Holy Spirit. (The three groups of two may be understood as an augmented three, followed by two more in relative diminution.) Bach plays with the meter in both suites' minuets in like fashion. Both of the minuet movements in Bach's cello suites are evidently rather to be played in the slower French manner than in the moderately paced German style, the reason being that both incorporate – implicitly in the G Major and expressly in the D Minor suite – what is called the *Passus Duriusculus* in the *Lexicon* of Johann Gottfried Walther (this author was Bach's cousin, and the first musical lexicographer in the German language). This term refers to a stock bass line formula, consisting of a chromatically ornamented descending minor tetrachord within a triple time signature, universally at this time symbolizing grief. Although Winold refers to this bass as a typical chaconne bass, without stipulating it as the *Lamento* form, Bach's symbolic use of it is elegiac. The composer uses the same bass, among other choral contexts, in his Cantata BWV 12, *Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen*, later adapting the same material for the *Crucifixus* of his *Mass in B Minor*. It is also the same bass line Purcell used for *Dido's Lament* in the opera *Dido and Aeneas*, so its significance during Bach's generation is generally agreed upon; it amounts to a universally understood *topos*. The continuo player upon seeing it would automatically have chromatically ornamented it accordingly, and even have filled out harmonies as necessary, with or without the use of a figured bass line (Valerie Walden: *One Hundred Years of Violoncello, 1740-1840*). These skills, growing out of the same roots as the seventeenth-century lute suite, would have translated seamlessly into the performance of these works for cello. On these grounds I feel compelled to reject both Casals's and Mattheson's interpretation of these particular menuetti to be expressive of 'moderate gaiety;' again Bach has crossed genre lines with them in a manner deemed quite offensive to his contemporaries (see Laurence Dreyfus: *Bach and the Patterns of Invention*), but always by way of ennobling a given genre.

Bourree: The interpolated dance movement of the Third and Fourth suites has been consistently misunderstood during the century since Pablo Casals first brought these works to prominence. Performed today universally as a hearty romp, in the manner of the *Bourree Auvergnat*, the French form of the dance, Mattheson by contrast characterizes the bourree in 1739 in Germany the following way: "The word Bourree in itself means something stuffed, filled out, sedate, strong, weighty, and yet soft or delicate [. . .] this is in agreement with the qualities of the Bourree, namely: content, pleasant, untroubled, tranquil, listless, gentle, and yet agreeable." Casals, essentially a French-school cellist, played the fast bourree with which he was familiar, and this has become the standard interpretation of the dance ever since. A recorded consensus among his successors has become a *de facto* scholarly one as well; this sort of error should be recognized more widely (see p. 14 of the Text Volume in the Barenreiter Urtext edition, for example; there the editors have quoted the same Mattheson passage given above in another translation, immediately after describing the movement as a 'lively running dance,' since this is the only way they have ever heard it on record. In my opinion scholarly consensus should be based upon what is correct according to original historical

sources rather than acquiescing to spurious traditions established by even the greatest performers).

Gavotte: In the last pair of cello suites Bach uses gavottes as the interpolated dances. Their character is defined by a pair of upbeat quarter notes, and the charm of this genre is such that it was used long after all other courtly dances saving only the *Minuet* were abandoned. Although like the other *Galanterien* it consists of a pair of dances in binary *da capo* form, in the case of the *Gavotte* a distinctive “double” or trio, called a *Musette* (from the French *Cornemuse*, or bagpipe), is intrinsic to the genre. Thus second *Gavottes* traditionally employ drones to accompany melody. Only implied in the Fifth Suite, Bach writes out this drone in the Sixth. (This is an instance where it becomes incumbent upon the modern performer to understand the nature of these dances to the extent that a characteristic element may be supplied even without Bach’s express instructions. Although counter to modern convention to add text to the score, there is ample evidence that this was something expected of a certain echelon of player during the Baroque period. In fact it was the easy, improvisatory familiarity with prevailing styles, topoi, and compositional procedures that enabled a player to become a court musician of high rank and pay during Bach’s lifetime. The same skills in extempore music making are demanded throughout these Suites, as they were in the finest continuo playing of the era.) Mattheson writes of the gavotte: “Its emotion is truly a real exultant joy. Its time-measure is indeed of an even sort but such a one as consists of two half beats; even though it, at the same time, allows itself to be divided into quarters; yes, even into eighths. I would wish that this distinction were taken heed of a little better, and that one would not be able to call most of them a *bad measure*; as does happen. The hopping character is a legitimate property of these Gavottes; by no means the running. I seem to see these mountain folk jumping about on their hills with their Gavottes.”

Gigue: The *Gigue*, for Mattheson, is characterized in the following excerpt from *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739): “The common or English Giges have as their distinguishing marks, an ardent and flying passion; a fury that quickly passes. The Italian Gigas, which are not made to be danced, but to be fiddled, drive themselves almost to the utmost speed or carelessness; yet, in the main, in a flowing and not violent manner; somewhat like a smooth shooting forth of the arrow-like torrent of a brook. To the ordinary gigue-tunes I can now apply four chief emotions: fury, or passion; pride; simple eagerness; and a careless temperament.” The ‘fury’ of the D Minor *Gigue* is contrasted by the ‘careless temperament’ of the G Major; this is another instance where Casals and Mattheson are in complete agreement. There are three types of giges used in the six cello suites: the moderately flowing English version in suites I, II, III, and VI, the slower *Canarie* in suite V, with its characteristic dotted rhythms, and the very quick Italian gigue, or Tarantella, in suite IV, much like an Italian corrente, but in duple meter instead of the triple characteristic of that dance.