

REVIEW BY LAURENCE VITTES  
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These unique performances bear the weight of the interpretive approach on which they're based. There's a sense that Myles Jordan, cellist of the DaPonte String Quartet, has experienced an illuminating spiritual crisis in which he forged the music as it came to him without taking the time to make it conventionally presentable.

By focusing on “four fundamental changes to the way these suites have been played until now”, Jordan makes it impossible to deny that the Suites are six individual pieces of music, each with its own personal purpose, emotional core, musical symbolism and conscience. Whether Bach would have preferred his music to be played on modern or “original” instruments, he would certainly have been surprised to learn that music lovers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century had come to regard those pieces as one impersonal, continuous musical stream whose outward stylistic characteristics trumped the profound human meaning of each suite individually.

The four changes (or rather issues) that Jordan highlights in his liner-notes are speeds “derived from Baroque sources”; the use of *pizzicato*, *con sordino*, *sul ponticello* and other timbral and textural devices “known to be used by continuo cellists at least since Monteverdi's time”; the realisation of what musicians casually refer to as “implied” harmony and counterpoint (but which most listeners can't hear); and the role these works may have played in Bach's life during the period he was dealing with the unexpected loss of his first wife.

Jordan's performances – on a five-string Baroque cello by Warren Ellison after a Brothers Amati instrument of 1609 – range from awkward to astonishing. Listeners accustomed to interpretations by the likes of Casals and Wispelwey will find an entirely new spectrum here. And although the playing is not that of an incandescent musical superstar, it is very human, inspiring and consoling.

These provocative performances come at just the right time. In early 2009 Sigiswald Kuijken will release his Accent recording of the Bach Suites played on a “violoncello or *viola de spalla*”, a large instrument held on the shoulder, which Kuijken believes was not superseded by the cello we know until between 1710 and 1750. Bach solo string music lovers and performers: get ready for a bumpy ride!